The Transfigured Sackcloth

W. L. Watkinson

Preachers of The Age

3.9.31

LIBRARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PRINCETON, N. J.

BV 4241 .W336
Watkinson, W. L.
The transfigured sackcloth
and other sermons

Preachers of the Age

REV. W. L. WATKINSON

Wm. L. Watkinson.

MAR 9 1931
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE
REV. W. L. WATKINSON
AUTHOR OF "THE INFLUENCE OF SCEPTICISM ON CHARACTER"

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY
LIMITED
St. Dunstan's House
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1893

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

TO THE

REV. BENJAMIN GREGORY, D.D.,

WITH MUCH RESPECT AND AFFECTION.

PREFACE.

The discourses contained in this volume were delivered in the Central Hall, Manchester, as Noonday Addresses. This fact will account for their somewhat special form. That they constitute a series, may explain, and excuse, the repetitions which occur in them, and which are almost unavoidable in such a method of popular treatment. It may be thought that the subjects here discussed were not the most appropriate to the occasion named; but it is an evidence of the deep interest taken by the general public in the discussion of Christian doctrine, that these discourses, and many others of similar form and import, were listened to from week to week by considerable congregations.

CONTENTS.

THE TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH.

PAGE

"For none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."—ESTHER iv. 2 1

THE GENESIS OF EVIL.

"And Jesus said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."—MARK vii. 20–23 23

THE LIMITATION OF EVIL.

"Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest."—JER. iii. 5 45

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVIL.

"For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."—2 COR. xi. 14 65

THE PLEA OF EVIL.

"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone."—MARK i. 23, 24 ... 87

THE EVOLUTION OF EVIL.

"But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."—2 TIM. iii. 13 109

THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL.

"Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the

PAGE

Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire."—JER. xxxvii. 9, 10 129

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF EVIL.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."—ROM. iii. 20 147

THE EXTINCTION OF EVIL.

"Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—JOHN iii. 3 169

THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people."—DEUT. xxxiii. 2, 3 189

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—1 COR. x. 13 205

THE ELIMINATION OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act."—ISA. xxviii. 21.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—REV. xxi. 3, 4 221

BIBLIOGRAPHY 237

THE TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH.

THE
TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH.

"For none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."
—ESTHER iv. 2.

THE sign of affliction was thus excluded from the Persian court in order that royalty might not be discomposed. The monarch was to see bright raiment, flowers, pageantry, smiling faces only; to hear only the voices of singing men and singing women; no smatch of the abounding wormwood of life was to touch his lip, no glimpse of its woe to disturb his serenity. The master of an empire spreading from India to Ethiopia was not to be annoyed by a passing shadow of mortality. Now, this disposition to place an interdict on disagreeable and painful things still survives. Men of all ranks and conditions ingeniously hide from themselves the dark facts of life—putting these aside, ignoring, disguising, forgetting, denying them. Revelation, however, lends no sanction to this habit of passing by the tragedy of life with averted face; and in this opening discourse we wish to show the entire reasonableness of revelation in its frank recognition of the dark aspects of existence. Christianity is sometimes scouted as "the

religion of sorrow," and many amongst us are ready to avow that the Persian forbidding the sackcloth is more to their taste than the Egyptian or the Christian dragging the corpse through the banquet; but we confidently contend that the recognition by Christ of the morbid phases of human life is altogether wise and gracious.

I. We consider, first, the recognition by revelation of *sin*. Sackcloth is the outward and visible sign of sin, guilt, and misery. How men shut their eyes to this most terrible reality — coolly ignoring, skilfully veiling, emphatically denying it! "The heart from the moment of its first beat instinctively longs for the beautiful. . . . We strive for the right and the true: it is circumstance that thrusts wrong upon us."[1] What is popularly called sin these philosophers call error, accident, inexperience, indecision, misdirection, imperfection, disharmony; but they will not allow the presence in the human heart of a malign force which asserts itself against God, and against the order of His universe. That principle which is darkness in the mind, perverseness in the will, idolatry in the affections, "every passion's wild excess, anger, lust, and pride,"—the existence of any such principle they absolutely and scornfully deny. There is no evil in the universe, all is good, and where everything is good human nature is still the best. A single substance comprises all that is, and no place is left for that profoundly divisive and destructive element called sin; all that we have to do is to descant on the marvellous loveliness of the world, the serene harmony of the universe, man's love of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Intellectual masters like Emerson and Renan ignore conscience; they refuse to acknowledge the selfishness, the baseness,

[1] Richard Jefferies.

the cruelty of society; they are deaf to the groans of creation; they smile, and expect us to smile, whilst they clap a purple patch of rhetoric on the running sores of humanity. No sackcloth must pass their gate, and no craftsman of Ind ever wove gossamer half so delicate and delightful as the verbal veil with which these literary artists attempt to conceal the leprosy of our nature.

And men generally are willing to dupe themselves touching the fact and power of sin; they are strongly disinclined to look directly and honestly at that inner confusion of which we are all more or less conscious. We willingly acknowledge our transgression of the higher law, that we do the things we ought not to do, and leave undone the things that we ought to do; we have an unpleasant feeling that all is not right, nay, indeed, that something is seriously wrong; but we do not unshrinkingly acquaint ourselves with the malady of the spirit as we should at once acquaint ourselves with any malady hinting itself in the flesh. The sackcloth must not mar our shallow happiness. Great is the power of self-deception, but in no other direction do we permit ourselves to be more profoundly cheated than we do in this. In the vision of beautiful things we forget the troubles of conscience, as the first sinners hid themselves amid the leaves and flowers of Paradise; in fashion and splendour we forget our guilty sorrow, as mediæval mourners sometimes concealed their cerements with raiment of purple and gold; in the noises of the world we become oblivious of the interior discords, as soldiers forget their wounds amid the stir and trumpets of the battle. With a busy life, a studious life, a gay life, we manage to forget the skeleton of the heart, rarely permitting ourselves to look upon the ominous spectre which

some way or other has entrenched itself within us, and which is the bane of our existence.

Nevertheless, sin thrusts itself upon our attention. The greatest thinkers in all ages have been constrained to recognize its presence and power. The creeds of all nations declare the fact that men everywhere feel the bitter working and intolerable burden of conscience. And, however we may strive to forget our personal sinfulness, the cry is ever being wrung from us in the deepest moments of life, "O wretched man that I am! who can deliver me from the body of this death?" The sense of sin has persisted through changing generations; it is the burden of experience and philosophy, and the genius of the race has exhausted itself in devising schemes of salvation. Walt Whitman writes of the animals—

> "They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
> They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
> They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God."

Let us hope that the countrymen of Milton and Bacon will not accept this dreary drip for either poetry or philosophy. Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, never wrote like this. They knew of truth, justice, purity, and love, of the supreme and eternal law of righteousness; they knew that man alone of all this lower creation is subject to this transcendental rule; they knew also that the violation of this highest law lay at the root of the world's mysterious and complex suffering—in other words, that sin was the secret of the tragedy of life. The beasts are happy because they are beasts; they do not lie awake in the dark weeping over their sins, because they have no sins to weep over; they do not discuss their duty to God, they do it; whilst, on the contrary, men are unhappy because being subject to the highest law of all, and

competent to fulfil that law in its utmost requirement, they have consciously fallen short of it, wilfully contradicted it. We cannot accept the coat of many colours, whatever the flatterers may say; the sackcloth is ours, and it eats our spirit like fire.

Most fully does Christ recognize the great catastrophe. Some modern theologians may dismiss sin as "a mysterious incident" in the development of humanity, as a grain of sand that has unluckily blown into the eye, as a thorn that has accidentally pierced our heel, but the greatest of ethical teachers regarded sin as a profound contradiction of that Eternal Will which is altogether wise and good. More than any other teacher Jesus Christ emphasized the actuality and awfulness of sin; more than any other has He intensified the world's consciousness of sin. He never attempted to relieve us of the sackcloth by asserting our comparative innocence; He never attempted to work into that melancholy robe one thread of colour, to relieve it with one solitary spangle of rhetoric. Sin was the burden of the life of Christ because it is the burden of our life. Christ has done more than insisted on the reality, the odiousness, the ominousness, of sin—He has laid bare its principle and essence. The New Testament discovers to us the mystery of iniquity as ungodliness; its inmost essence being unbelief in God's truth, the denial of His justice, the rejection of His love, the violation of His law. The South Sea Islanders have a singular tradition to account for the existence of the dew. The legend relates that in the beginning the earth touched the sky, that being the golden age when all was beautiful and glad; then some dreadful tragedy occurred, the primal unity was broken up, the earth and sky were torn asunder as we see them now,

and the dewdrops of the morning are the tears that nature sheds over the sad divorce. This wild fable is a metaphor of the truth; the beginning of all evil lies in the alienation of the spirit of man from God, in the divorce of earth from heaven; here is the final reason why the face of humanity is wet with tears. How vividly Christ taught that all our fear and woe arise out of this false relation of our spirit to the living God! Above and beyond all, Christ recognizes the sackcloth that He may take it away. In the anguish of his soul Job cried, "I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of men?" Christianity is God's full and final answer to that appeal. In Christ we have the revelation of God's ceaseless, immeasurable, eternal love. In Him we have the satisfaction of God's sovereign justice. Our own awakened conscience feels the difficulty of absolution; it demands that sin shall not be lightly passed over; it wearies itself to find an availing sacrifice and atonement. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" In Him, too, we have that grace which brings us into accord with the mind and government of God. Christ reveals to us the divine ideal life; He awakens in us a passion for that life; He leads us into the power and privilege, the liberty and gladness, of that life. He fills our imagination with the vision of His own divine loveliness; He refreshes our will from founts of unfathomable power; He fills us with courage and hope; He crowns us with victory. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Sin is ungodliness; Christ makes us to see light in God's light, fills us with His love, attunes our spirit to the infinite music of His perfection. Instead of shutting out the signs of woe, Christ followed an infinitely deeper philosophy; He

arrayed Himself in the sackcloth, becoming sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. We have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; He establishes us in a true relation to the holy God; He restores in us the image of God; He fills us with the peace of God that passeth understanding.

Not in the spirit of a barren cynicism does Christ lay bare the ghastly wound of our nature, but as a noble physician who can purge the mortal virus which destroys us. He has done this for thousands; He is doing it now; in these very moments He can give sweet release to all who are burdened and beaten by the dire confusion of nature. Sin is a reality; absolution, sanctification, peace, are not less realities. Christ's gate is not shut to the penitent, neither does He send him empty away. We go to Him in sackcloth, but we leave His presence in purity's robe of snow, in honour's stainless purple, in the heavenly blue of the holiness of truth. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him, that He may give to the mourners in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

II. We consider the recognition by revelation of *sorrow*. Sackcloth is the raiment of sorrow, and as such it was interdicted by the Persian monarch. We still follow the same insane course, minimizing, despising, masking, denying suffering. Society sometimes attempts this. The affluent entrench themselves within belts of beauty and fashion, excluding the sights and sounds of a suffering world. "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst

of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." So do opulent and selfish men still seek "to hide their heart in a nest of roses." Literature sometimes follows the same cue. Goethe made it one of the rules of his life to avoid everything that could suggest painful ideas, and the taint of his egotism is on a considerable class of current literature which serenely ignores the morbid aspects of life. Art has yielded to the same temptation. The artist has felt that he was concerned only with strength, beauty, and grace; that he had nothing to do with weakness, agony, wretchedness, and death. Why should sorrow find perpetual remembrance in art? Pain will tear and mar our bodies, but we will have no wrinkles on our statues; suffering will rend our heart, but we will have no shadows on our pictures. None clothed in sackcloth might enter the gate that is called Beautiful.

Most of us are inclined to the sorry trick of gliding over painful things. We resolutely put from us sober signs and serious thoughts, and sometimes are really angry with those who exhibit life as it is, and who urge us to seek reconciliation with it. When the physician prescribed blisters to Marie Bashkirtseff to check her consumptive tendency, the vain cynical girl wrote, "I will put on as many blisters as they like. I shall be able to hide the mark by bodices trimmed with flowers and lace and tulle, and a thousand other delightful things that are worn, without being required; it may even look pretty. Ah! I am comforted." Yes, by a thousand artifices do we dissemble our ugly scars, sometimes even pressing our deep misfortunes into the service

of our pride. Many of the fashions and diversions of the world much sought after have little positive attractiveness, but the real secret of their power is found in the fact that they hide disagreeable things, and render men for awhile oblivious of the mystery and weight of an unintelligible world.

Nevertheless suffering is a stern fact that will not long permit us to sleep. Some have taught the unreality of pain, but the logic of life has spoiled their plausible philosophizing. A man may carry many hallucinations with him to the grave, but a belief in the unreality of pain is hardly likely to be one of them. The laughing philosopher is quite invincible on his midsummer's day, but eré long fatality makes him sad. There is no screen to shut off permanently the spectacle of suffering. When Marie Antoinette passed to her bridal in Paris, the halt, the lame, and the blind were sedulously kept out of her way, lest their appearance should mar the joyousness of her reception ; but, ere long, the poor queen had a very close view of misery's children, and she drank to the dregs the cup of life's bitterness. Reason as we may, suppress the disagreeable truths of life as we may, suffering will find us out, and pierce us to the heart. Indeed, despite our dissimulations, we know that life is not a matter of lutes, doves, and sunflowers, and at last we have little patience with those who thus seek to represent it. We will not have the philosophy which ignores suffering; witness the popularity of Schopenhauer. We resent the art which ignores sorrow. True art has no pleasure in sin and suffering, in torture, horror, and death ; but on its palette must lie the sober colourings of human life, and so to-day the most popular picture of the world is the "Angelus"

of Millet. We will not have the literature that ignores suffering. "Humanity will look upon nothing else but its old sufferings. It loves to see and touch its wounds, even at the risk of reopening them. We are not satisfied with poetry unless we find tears in it." We will not have the theology which ignores sin and suffering. The preacher who confines his discourses to pleasant themes has a meagre following; the people swiftly and logically conclude that if life is as flowery as the discourse, the preacher is superfluous. Foolish we may often be, yet we cannot accept this Gethsemane for a garden of the gods; the most wilful lotus-eater must perforce see the streaming tears, the stain of blood, the shadow of death. Nature in the full swing of her pageantry soon forgets the wild shriek of the bird in the red talons of the hawk, and all other sad and tragic things, but humanity is compelled to note the blood and tears which flow everywhere, and to lay these things to heart.

Christianity boldly recognizes the sad element in human life. Classic religions had little or nothing to do with the sorrows of the million; the gods reigned on Mount Olympus, taking little note of the griefs of mortals. Far otherwise is it with the Christian revelation. Here the whole world of suffering is contemplated, and everywhere the Deity is found intensely and sympathetically interested in the suffering race. Christ throws the master-light on the problem of pain. He makes clear to us the origin of suffering. He shows that it does not spring out of the primitive and essential constitution of things, that it is not necessary and inevitable, but that its genesis is in the error of the human will. Christ has shown us the connection between sin and suffering, discovering suffering as the direct fruit of moral

disobedience. In this discovery lies the beginning of hope. If the very substratum of the universe had been vicious, and suffering inextricably interwoven with the constitution of things, there would have been no ground for hope, no possibility of redemption; but if suffering originate in the error of the human will, it ceases at once if the erring will be brought into sweet correspondence with the beautiful primitive order of the universe. This dawn of hope in the abyss of our despair brightens into day when we learn the power of Christ to establish this harmony. Some of the ablest thinkers have failed to solve the problem of the world, because they would not acknowledge the reality of sin; but Christ allows the reality of sin, and finds in it the secret of disorder, disease, and death. Dealing with sin, He dries up the stream of sorrow at its fountain. By the authority of that word which speaks the forgiveness of our sin; by the power of that love which is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, and by the side of which selfishness, the principle of sin, cannot live; and by the delicate discipline of that redeeming government which subdues us into accord with the sweet and majestic law of the world, Christ wipes away all tears from the face of such as obey Him.

Christ gives us the noblest example of suffering. So far from shutting His gate on the sackcloth, once more He adopted it, and showed how it might become a robe of glory. He Himself was pre-eminently a Man of sorrows; He exhausted all forms of suffering; touching life at every point, at every point He bled; and in Him we learn how to sustain our burden and to triumph throughout all the tragedy. In His absolute rectitude, in His confidence in His Father, in His hours of prayer, in His self-sacrificing

regard for His fellow-sufferers, in His charity, faith, and patience, we see how the heaviest cross may be borne in the spirit of victory. We learn from Him how divine grace can mysteriously make the sufferer equal to the bitterest martyrdom; not putting to our lips some anodyne cup to paralyze life, but giving us conquest through the strength and bravery of reason in its noblest mood, through faith in its sublimest exercise, through a love that many waters cannot quench nor the floods drown. Poison is said to be extracted from the rattlesnake for medicinal purposes; but infinitely more wonderful is the fact that the suffering which comes out of sin counterworks sin, and brings to pass the transfiguration of the sufferer.

Christ teaches us how, under the redemptive government of God, suffering has become a subtle and magnificent process for the full and final perfecting of human character. Science tells how the bird-music, which is one of nature's foremost charms, has arisen out of the bird's cry of distress in the morning of time; how originally the music of field and forest was nothing more than an exclamation caused by the bird's bodily pain and fear, and how through the ages the primal note of anguish has been evolved and differentiated until it has risen into the ecstasy of the lark, melted into the silver note of the dove, swelled into the rapture of the nightingale, unfolded into the vast and varied music of the sky and the summer. So Christ shows us that out of the personal sorrow which now rends the believer's heart he shall arise in moral and infinite perfection; that out of the cry of anguish wrung from us by the present distress shall spring the supreme music of the future.

The Persian monarch forbidding sackcloth had forgotten that consolation is a royal prerogative; but the King of

kings has not forgotten this, and very sweet and availing is His sovereign sympathy. Scherer recommends "amusement as a comfortable deceit by which we avoid a permanent *tête-à-tête* with realities that are too heavy for us." Is there not a more excellent way than this? Let us carry our sorrows to Christ, and we shall find that in Him they have lost their sting. It is a clumsy mistake to call Christianity a religion of sorrow—it is a religion *for* sorrow. Christ finds us stricken and afflicted, and His words go down to the depths of our sorrowful heart, healing, strengthening, rejoicing with joy unspeakable. He finds us in sackcloth; He clothes us with singing-robes, and crowns us with everlasting joy.

III. We consider the recognition by revelation of *death*. We have, again, adroit ways of shutting the gate upon that sackcloth which is the sign of death. A recent writer allows that Shakespeare, Raleigh, Bacon, and all the Elizabethans shuddered at the horror and mystery of death; the sunniest spirits of the English Renaissance quailed to think of it. He then goes on to observe that there was something in this fear of the child's vast and unreasoned dread of darkness and mystery, and such a way of viewing death has become obsolete through the scientific and philosophic developments of the later centuries.[1] Walt Whitman also tells us "that nothing can happen more beautiful than death," and he has expressed the humanist view of mortality in a hymn which his admirers regard as the high-water mark of modern poetry. But will this rhapsody bear thinking about? Is death "delicate," "lovely and soothing," "delicious," coming to us with "serenades"? Does death "lave us in a flood of bliss"? Does "the body

[1] "The New Spirit."

gratefully nestle close to death"? Do we go forth to meet death "with dances and chants of fullest welcome"? It is vain to attempt to hide the direst fact of all under plausible metaphors and rhetorical artifice. It is in defiance of all history that men so write. It is in contradiction of the universal instinct. It is mockery to the dying. It is an outrage upon the mourners. The Elizabethan masters were far truer to the fact; so is the modern sceptic who shrinks at "the black and horrible grave."[1] Men never speak of delicious blindness, of delicious dumbness, of delicious deafness, of delicious paralysis; and death is all these disasters in one, all these disasters without hope. No, no, the *morgue* is the last place that lends itself to decoration. Death is the crowning evil, the absolute bankruptcy, the final defeat, the endless exile. Let us not shut our eyes to this. The sceptic often tells us that he will have no "make-believe." Let us have no "make-believe" about death. Let us candidly apprehend death for all that it is of mystery and bitterness, and reconcile ourselves to it, if reconciliation be possible. If we are foolish enough to shut the gate on the thought of death, by no stratagem can we shut the gate upon death itself.

Without evasion or euphony Christ recognizes the sombre mystery. The fact, the power, the terror of death are displayed by Him without reserve or softening. And He goes to the root of the dire and dismal matter. He shows us that death as we know it is an unnatural thing, that it is the fruit of disobedience, and by giving us purity and peace He gives us eternal life. The words of Luther, so full of power, were called "half-battles;" but the words of Christ in their depth and majesty are complete battles,

[1] John Morley, "Rousseau."

in which sin, suffering, and death are finally routed. He attempts no logical proof of immortality; He supplies no chemical formula for the resurrection; He demonstrates immortality by raising us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, by filling our soul with infinite aspirations and delights. Here is the proof supreme of immortality. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." The moral works are the greater works. Wonderful is the stilling of the sea, the healing of the blind, the raising of the dead, but the moral miracles of our Lord express a still diviner power and carry with them a more absolute demonstration. If, therefore, we have known the power of Christ delivering our soul from the blindness, the paralysis, the death of sin, lifting it above the dust and causing it to exult in the liberties and delights of the heavenlies, why should we think it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? If He has wrought the greater, He will not fail with the less. Christianity opens our eyes to splendid visions, makes us heirs of mighty hopes, and for all its prospects and promises it demands our confidence on the ground of its present magnificent and undeniable moral achievements. Its predictions are credible in the light of its spiritual efficacy. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Being one with Christ in the power of purity, we are one with Him in the power of an endless life. Death has its temporary conquest, but

grace reigning through righteousness shall finally purge the last taint of mortality. Not through the scientific and philosophic developments of later centuries has the sombre way of viewing death become obsolete; Christ bringing life and immortality to life has brought about the great change in the point of view from which we regard death, the point of view which is full of consolation and hope. In Christ alone the crowning evil becomes a coronation of glory; the absolute bankruptcy, the condition of an incorruptible inheritance; the final defeat, an everlasting victory; the endless exile, home, home at last. Once more, by boldly adopting the sackcloth Christ has changed it into a robe of light. "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

We cannot escape the evils of life; they are inevitable and inexorable. We may hide from our eyes the signs and sights of mourning; but in royal splendour our hearts will still bleed; wearing wreaths of roses our heads will still ache. A preacher who complains that Christianity is "the religion of sorrow," goes on to predict that the woes of the world are fast coming to an end, and then the sorrowful religion of Jesus Christ will give place to some purer faith. "Through the chinks we can see the light. The condition of man becomes more comfortable, more easy; the hope of man is more visible; the endeavour of man is more often crowned with success; the attempt to solve the darkest life-problems is not so desperate as it was. The reformer meets with fewer rebuffs; the philanthropist does not despair as he did. The light is dawning. The great teachers of knowledge multiply, bear their burdens more and more steadily; the traditions of truth and knowledge

are becoming established in the intellectual world. It is so; and those of us who have caught a vision of the better times coming through reason, through knowledge, through manly and womanly endeavour, have caught a sight of a Christendom passing away, of a religion of sorrow declining, of a gospel preached for the poor no longer useful to a world that is mastering its own problems of poverty and lifting itself out of disabling misery into wealth without angelic assistance. This is our consolation; and while we admit, clearly and frankly, the real power of the popular faith, we also see the pillars on which a new faith rests, which shall be a faith, not of sorrow, but of joy."[1] Now, the deepest sorrow of the race is not physical, neither is it bound up with material and social conditions. As the Scotch say, "The king sighs as often as the peasant;" and the proverb anticipates the fact that those who participate in the richest civilization that will ever flower will sigh as men sigh now. When the problem of poverty is mastered, when disease is extirpated, when a period is put to all disorganization of industry and misgovernment, social and political, it will be found by the emancipated and enriched community what is now found by opulent individuals and privileged classes, that the secret of our discontent is internal and mysterious, that it springs from the godlessness, the egotism, the sensuality, which theology calls sin. But whatever the future may reveal, all the sorrows of life are upon us here and now; we cannot deny them, we have constantly to struggle with them, we are often overwhelmed by irreparable misfortune. Esther "sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take his sackcloth from him: but he received it not." In vain do men offer us robes of beauty,

[1] Frothingham.

chiding us for wearing the colour of the night; we cannot be deceived by flattering words; we must give place to all the sad thoughts of our mortality until haply we find a salvation that goes to the root of our suffering, that dries up the fount of our tears.

In a very different spirit and for very different ends do men contemplate the dark side of human life. The cynic expatiates on painful things—the blot on life's beauty, the shadow on its glory, the pitiful ending of its brave shows—only to gibe and mock. The realist lingers in the dissecting chamber for very delight in revolting themes. The pessimist enlarges on the power of melancholy that he may justify despair. The poet touches the pathetic string that he may flutter the heart. Fiction dramatizes the tragic sentiment for the sake of literary effect. Cultured wickedness drinks wine out of a skull, that by sharp contrast it may heighten its sensuous delight. Whilst æstheticism dallies with the sad experiences of life to the end of intellectual pleasure, as in ornamental gardening dead leaves are left on ferns and palms in the service of the picturesque. But Christianity gives such large recognition to the pathetic element of life, not that it may mock with the cynic, or trifle with the artist; not because with the realist it has a ghoulish delight in horror, or because with the refined sensualist it cunningly aims to give poignancy to pleasure by the memory of pain; but because it divines the secret of our mighty misfortune, and brings with it the sovereign antidote. The critics declare that Rubens had an absolute delight in representing pain, and they refer us to that artist's picture of the "Brazen Serpent" in the National Gallery. The canvas is full of the pain, the fever, the contortions of the wounded and dying; the

writhing, gasping crowd is everything, and the supreme instrument of cure, the brazen serpent itself, is small and obscure, no conspicuous feature whatever of the picture. The manner of the great artist is so far out of keeping with the spirit of the gospel. Revelation brings out broadly and impressively the darkness of the world, the malady of life, the terror of death, only that it may evermore make conspicuous the uplifted Cross, which, once seen, is death to every vice, a consolation in every sorrow, a victory over every fear.

THE GENESIS OF EVIL.

THE GENESIS OF EVIL.

"And Jesus said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."—MARK vii. 20-23.

OUR Lord here declares the human heart to be originative; that the vices which darken the world take their rise within us; in the mystery of the soul He teaches us to seek for the mystery of iniquity. Some of our thinkers find man to be a very superficial creature indeed; they treat of him as of the simplest bit of mechanism; to them he is an organ of whose entire contents they can give an exact and complete specification; nay, to change the figure, he is nothing more than a hollow reed moaning or melodic just as it is breathed upon by the fitful wind. They find nothing unaccountable in him, nothing mysterious in his vices or virtues; the laws of matter and motion explain his whole life, character, conduct, doom; there is no problem suggested by man that is more insoluble than the problems of chemistry and astronomy. But He who knew us best saw in us an abyss of mystery, an originative, inscrutable, intense, supernatural element, and in this element He finds the genesis of that evil by which the world is cursed.

Whilst many vainly scrutinize the objective world for the causes of evil, Christ looks within and finds the secret of our woe in the weakness and licence of our heart.

I. Let us observe *several theories of the origin of evil which are condemned by the text.*

1. The theory which finds *the origin of evil in the physical world* is thus condemned. Philosophers and theologians, alike in ancient and in modern times, have been content to consider sin as a physiological question; as a matter of blood, tissue, nerve; as a weakness, a confusion, a morbid condition of our physical constitution. Very popular, indeed, in contemporaneous thought is the doctrine that moral evil is only a manifestation of corporeal evil; that the morally defective must be placed in the same category with the maimed, the halt, the blind; that Byron's deformed foot must be coupled with the disorders of his mind. Our Lord directly condemns this view. Several sins mentioned by Him in the text have nothing whatever to do with the body, and when fleshly sins are specified they are imputed to interior causes. Christ discovers a hidden cause within the corporeal—determining and dominating the corporeal. The body and its members may prove the occasion and furnish the instruments of transgression, but in the view of our Lord all sins are mystical in their origin and essence; the guilty agent is still the living, conscious, free spirit of the man himself. Very differently indeed do we regard our sins and our bodily infirmities. For the former we are ashamed of ourselves, we scorn ourselves; for the latter we commiserate ourselves. We are to be pitied for the blind eyes, the leprous skin, the withered hand, the weak ankle—they are the accidents of our physical life; but adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, belong to

another category altogether—they spring out of thought, emotion, will, out of that inner kingdom of which Heaven has appointed us masters, and for the anarchy of which it holds us responsible.

Sin, then, can never be treated adequately whilst it is treated only medicinally. Our scientists, by the aid of powerful lenses, intense lights, exquisite adjustments, have succeeded in rendering visible the germs of several terrible maladies which decimate us, and these ardent naturalists hope ultimately to discover germs still more minute and obscure. But can any one believe that a bacteria of immorality will ever be revealed by the microscope as the germs of disease have been? Fever and cholera germs, germs of consumption, hydrophobia, erysipelas, have been disclosed by the fierce light of modern research; but no one will suppose that the germs of intemperance, impurity, anger, covetousness, deceit, pride, murder, foolishness, will ever be thrown on the screen, and an antidote be found for them in the pharmacopœia. Oh, if it were thus possible to exhibit the secret of our sins, how we should shudder at the sight of the naked human heart, and shrink from the ghastly things which nestle there! But such a spectacle is not possible, and we are sure that it never will be. The germs of moral disease are in the soul itself; no glass of science may make them visible, no physician may deal with them, no medicine purge them. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood." Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by irregular desire—the subtle motions of a soul false to itself.

> "Life has antagonists we little know;
> Its tangible perils, fates by land or sea,
> For these our natural functions hold the key;

Assail what will, the postern-gates of sense
Keep, night and day, their vantage of defence;
But the wild brood that gender in the brain,
Delusions, honeyed lies, hope's legerdemain,
What antidote can salve their hidden bane,
Whence spring they? There be phantom powers of ill
That warp the credulous fancy to the will;
Nay, ofttimes, in this earth and girdling air
Strange mystery works, to cozen and ensnare;
Fair, tricksome shapes that lure us to our doom,
Caught in the iron mesh of some remorseless loom."

Christ concerned Himself largely with the body; He knew all its wards and windings; He knew all that was meant by health and disease; He knew the secret link that unites the mind with its organs; but He never hints that the treatment of the body will prove the healing of the soul. His testimony lies quite the other way—that through the soul lies the healing of the body. We have amongst us a school of physicians who maintain the virtue of intellectual and æsthetic medicines in physical disease. They insist upon the power of imagination, which by exalting the mind from a lower to a higher object excites fresh nervous energy, and so checks unhealthiness of feeling and physique; upon the power of thought, mental activity often assisting in counteracting morbid conditions; upon the power of faith and hope, a bright and lofty confidence often working undeniable cures; upon the power of resolution, the will being a factor in the failure or recovery of health whose importance it is not easy to exaggerate. The imaginative, the rational, the volitional, they maintain, are of far greater efficacy in the preservation and restoration of health than medical science has generally recognized, and they predict that the science of the future will pay much more heed to these spiritual powers and activities.

Christ lent His sanction to this theory; through the mind He healed the flesh. But the New Testament lends no sanction to the theory that moral and bodily evils are identical, and that faults of character and conduct will be cured by air, soap, diet, and medicine. Deeper than the body lies the ultimate reason of sin; and whilst all physical education and perfecting are in the right direction, the hope of moral purity and beauty lies in the truth that pierces the conscience, the ideal that kindles the imagination, the grace that strengthens the will, in the faith which works by love and purifies the heart. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." First, evil thoughts proceeding from the depths of the personality, then all the dark vices and crimes which afflict the world. The physician will not avail here.

2. The text condemns *the theory which finds the origin of evil in the intellectual nature of man.* Socrates resolved all virtue into knowledge; all vice into ignorance and folly. According to him men do wrong because they are not fully or correctly informed of the consequences of their actions; the proper antidote for transgression being enlarged teaching touching law, judgment, duty. The Greek philosopher took account simply of the intellect, ignorance being, in his idea, the capital deficiency. And this view of sin is held at this hour by many teachers of distinction. "The evil in the world is the result of bad education and bad institutions."[1] But Christ gives another explanation of sin. Sin is not ignorance; it is no mere blunder; it is no maggot in the brain; it is not inconsequent reasoning; it is not undisciplined judgment. The ultimate cause of sin is in the conscious willing spirit, in the mystery of imagination,

[1] John Morley, "Diderot."

feeling, sympathy, desire. The Greek found the genesis of sin in the uninstructed, or illogical understanding; Christ, in the licentious fancy, the wayward passions, the perverse will, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And Christ's deeper view is borne out by the facts of the case, for with the fullest knowledge of the situation we constantly in matters of conduct do the things that we ought not to do. We are not governed by what we know instinctively. The birds of the air, the butterflies of the garden, the cattle in the fields, are true to their special instincts, true to the experience of their ancestry through many generations; but men constantly do violence to the clearest and best impulses of their nature. "What they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." We are not governed by what we know historically. That experience of their progenitors which in the animal world passes into a blind instinct, urging the creature into paths of security and satisfaction, becomes in the human race through history an enlightened principle of action, prompting men to salutary action, warning them against courses which are inconvenient and dangerous; yet we continually disregard the clearest and most solemn conclusions of history. We are not governed by what we know logically. Many questions of duty are clear to our reason as the light of day; but in actual life we habitually disregard the strongest and best persuasions of our understanding. We are not governed by what we know experimentally. In certain hours we set aside the experience of a lifetime; with fingers dreadfully burnt we persist in playing with the fire. We are not governed by what we know supernaturally. Multitudes who receive the light of revelation as light from heaven are flagrantly and repeatedly

disobedient to the heavenly vision. No; sin is not ignorance; it is not lack of light, but hatred of light; and it is an inexcusable error to dwell exclusively on the intellectual conditions of human conduct and ignore the great deep of the human bosom. Sin is fancy, caprice, passion, desire, egotism, wilfulness, asserting themselves against knowledge, logic, experience, conviction, conscience.

And as sin does not originate in any lack of intellectual light, or power, or discipline, so the world will not be renovated by intellect. It is as clear as anything can be that intellect and morals are disparate; superiority of genius does not imply moral excellence, as superiority of goodness does not imply intellectual force. We have seen all too often the finest artists living foulest lives; oracles of science mastered by the meanest vices; the most brilliant lights of literature obscured by the vapours and choked by the ashes of sensual life. Culture may know the best that has been said and written; but to *do* the best when you know it, is the real problem of life, and this problem culture very generally fails to solve. "What is called civilization drives away the tiger, but breeds the fox." The Italian statesman, Signor Crispi, in a great speech called liberty and science "the religion of the future;" but if the creed of the future contains no other doctrines than these, some very dark chapters will have to be added to the history of the world. Education is all in the right direction, but the knowledge of letters, science, philosophy, government, taste, will never correct that deep fault of our nature out of which springs the transgression of the moral law. The wretchedness of the world is created by men who "do err in their heart," and the cure for this is not in mathematics, in science, or in art. Intellectual culture does not touch

the inertia, the blindness, the ingratitude, the selfishness, the cruelty, the wilfulness, which bring our acutest sense of guilt, our bitterest experiences of woe. And careful observers are beginning to see that the redemption of the intelligence is not the redemption of the heart; that the race will not be saved by intellect; and that it is easy to expect too much from the spread of knowledge.[1] The sooner we all come to this conclusion the better. It will be a good thing every way when society quite comprehends that reason alone does not incite people to right-doing; that men may be entirely sane and exceptionally intellectual and yet commit the most atrocious crimes; that we must believe in depravity as well as in disease. The schoolmaster does splendid service, but he hardly touches the fundamental evil.

3. The text condemns *the theory which finds the origin of evil in the power of circumstance.* In opposition to those who hold that circumstances determine character, our Lord says, No, from within, out of the heart, come the evil things of human conduct; in the secret bias of the soul, not in unpropitious surroundings, do evil words and deeds find generation. Now the science of our day corresponds with our Lord's teaching on the inwardness of character. It has been thought that the theory of evolution strengthens the belief in the power of circumstances by teaching that the special form and colour of things are determined immediately by the neighbourhood in which they spring. But evolution does not teach any such thing. So far as plants are concerned, it is recognized that their characteristics are from within—they vary primarily, not because of something special in their locality, but from a mysterious

[1] Thornton, "Opposites."

innate tendency to variation for which no scientist can account. "External conditions can never occasion an inheritable change of form, whether advantageous or the contrary; can neither determine the development of an organ nor its abortion. Structural peculiarities, advantageous and disadvantageous, present themselves in individual varieties, quite independently of any direct influence of external conditions."[1] From within, out of the secret heart of the plant, comes its special size, shape, colour, markings, perfume. And with respect to animal organisms it is the same. The old evolutionists feeling strongly the selective power of circumstances, yet felt constrained to recognize deep interior causes as determining the changes which take place in living things. Darwin writes Huxley thus: "You have most cleverly hit on one point, which has greatly troubled me; if, as I think, external conditions produce little *direct* effect, what the devil determines each particular variation? What makes a tuft of feathers come on a cock's head, or moss on a moss-rose?"[2] This passage is instructive as it shows the utility of the orthodox creed in giving men something to swear by, but it is specially instructive as showing how clearly Darwin recognized the mysterious interior force as determining the organization. Later evolutionists have gone further still in the same direction, holding that any changes a creature may exhibit were first in the germ out of which the creature has sprung, and that the germinal matter itself was determined by mental rather than by physical causes. The germ determines the organism, the soul fashions the germ; we must go behind physical causes into a region of antecedent psychical causes, the ultimate reason for the characteristics

[1] Kerner, "Flowers." [2] "Life and Letters."

of a creature being found in the imaginative and emotional condition of its parents. It is, to say the least of it, profoundly interesting to see our scientists in their search for origins, turning from the exterior, the tangible, the mechanical, that they may gaze into those obscure and mysterious depths which open within even the lowest organism. Christ taught that human character is a question of soul and not of situation. He taught us to look into the infinite depths of the heart for the reasons of good and evil doing. Our text, with an authority not easily resisted, teaches that the evil of life is not attributable to superficial unhappy externalisms; it is the result of an unchastened imagination, of a lawless mind, of licentious emotion, of misplaced admiration, of false ambition; the outgoing of an indolent, an egotistic, a base soul. The physical world unfolds from within; the character of man is but the visibility of his thought.

And sin will not be cured by circumstances. God forbid that we should speak lightly of those who seek to improve the race through the improvement of its conditions. We reverence them, we hail them as fellow-workers in the same magnificent cause. But if we are to bless men effectually, we must get to the fountain-head of their sorrows—the thought and imagination of their heart. As Jeremy Taylor says, "You cannot cure the colic by brushing a man's clothes." No bettering of the lot of the individual will necessarily make his spirit sweet, contented, pure. Neither will the propitious environment make the virtuous and happy community. Eden, Sodom, Canaan, proved this in the old world, and there are plenty of proofs of it in the modern world. An eloquent traveller recently wrote, "I thought of our modern Radicals, of our sentimental

believers in the natural goodness of man, and of what a lesson these people might learn from Cyprus. Here were no wicked plutocrats, no hereditary aristocracy. The merchant princes and the nobles of the Middle Ages had gone. They had not left even the memory of their names behind, and modern times had produced no class to replace them. The larger part of the population owned the larger part of the soil. They worked by themselves and for themselves. They had no example except their own to corrupt them, and no oppression except that of the necessary tax-gatherer. They lived, in fact, under the Radical's ideal conditions, and yet crimes, which included crimes of the most brutal and degraded character, occurred amongst them with a frequency not to be matched in any country of aristocratic and capitalistic Europe. Surely this in itself is enough to show how false, or at best how insufficient, is the theory, that the wickedness of the many is caused by the artificial oppressions of the few."[1] It is easy to expect too much from politics; it is easy to expect too much from the absence of politics. The nature of the race will assert itself, and, whatever the exterior conditions may be, display its weakness. Many reformers proceed on the bland supposition that man at last is a lover of the light, a lover of equity, a lover of love, a lover of purity, and granted fair play he will soon show how little need there is of government and law; change the conditions and the poison-berry of the wilderness becomes a luscious peach, so wiser and more generous conditions will reveal the innate strength and sweetness of our nature. This is altogether contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. He declares that men love darkness rather than light; that they lack conscience; that

[1] Mallock, "The Enchanted Isle."

they put lust in the place of love; that whilst compelled to admire the noble they violate it; that whilst compelled to praise the beautiful and the sacred they profane them; that in presence of the higher and the lower, they deliberately prefer the lower and delight in it. Here is the corruption that comes before all law, example, education, custom, government; and this corruption no felicity of circumstance may cure. As the evil of the world will not be cured by the physician, nor by the schoolmaster, neither will it be cured by the statesman.

At the present moment there are two theories in the field to explain the origin of contagious diseases—the parasitic theory, and the theory of the innate character of diseases. The parasitic theory assumes that diseases are originated by microbes first diffused in the atmosphere, and then taken into the system by the air we breathe, the water we drink, the things we touch. The advocates of the innate character of diseases hold, on the contrary, that the disease is spontaneously developed in the patient; the first cause is in morbid changes which are purely chemical, changes produced in the actual substance of the tissues and secretions without any external intervention of microbes; the microbes, where they really exist, being only a secondary phenomenon, a complication, and not the scientific cause which actually determines the disease. Now, whatever may be the exact truth in this biological controversy, it is evident that the first cause of such disease must be sought in a defect of life, a feebleness, a certain untoward disposition and receptivity in the organism itself. The phylloxera devastates the French vineyards because the vines have been exhausted by excessive cultivation; tuberculosis fastens upon man because of obscure conditions of

bodily weakness and susceptibility; vigorous plants and robust constitutions defying the foreign destructive bodies which may fill the air—extrinsic influence and excitement counting for little where the intrinsic tendency does not exist. Revelation assumes that the man morally occupies much the same position. Environment brings the opportunity for evil, the solicitation or provocation to evil, so far do evil communications corrupt good manners; but the first cause of all must be found in the heart itself, in its lack of right direction, sympathy, and force; in a word, the scientific cause of sin is the spiritual cause.

Our Lord, then, has nothing to say about the beauty of human nature. The greatest Moralist of all found the instinctive propensity to evil in the human heart. And how prolific that propensity, according to the showing of the Lord! What a catalogue we have here! "Thoughts that are evil, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, malignant glances, railing, pride, unreasoning folly, irrational conduct." And this enumeration is suggestive only, not exhaustive. An American naturalist tells us that the human brain is full of birds. The song-birds might all have been hatched in the human heart, so well do they express the whole gamut of human passion and emotion in their varied songs. The plaintive singers, the soaring ecstatic singers, the gushing singers, the inarticulate singers—robin, dove, lark, thrush, mocking-bird, nightingale,—all are expressive of human emotion, desire, love, sadness, aspiration, glee. Very beautiful, indeed, is it to find our brain full of the sweet minstrels of the air; but, alas! Christ gives a sadder view of our heart, showing it to be "the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every

unclean and hateful bird." Fierce hawk, croaking raven, ravenous vulture, obscene birds, birds of discord, birds of darkness, birds of tempest, birds of blood and death,—these are all typical of the heart's base passions; these all brood and nestle within, and fly forth to darken, pollute, and destroy. And the Master is not here speaking of some hearts, but of the human heart generally. In the woods we find occasionally a bird with a false note, in the fields a misshapen flower, yet beauty and music are the prevailing characteristics of the landscape; but stepping into society, the universal discord and misery declare the common radical defect of our nature. We consider—

II. *Christ's treatment of evil.* When a young man consulted John Newton touching the origin of evil, the divine replied, "That he was more anxious to get sin out of the world than to know how it came into the world." But really this saying is not so wise as it seems, for to know where sin takes its rise is of first consequence in attempting its extirpation. In the soul Christ declared that it took its origin, and in the soul Christ sought to deal with it—supplying a spiritual antidote for a spiritual plague. He sets before us the highest thoughts and ideals; He creates within us strong faith in these thoughts and ideals; He strengthens us in the inner man that we may scale the heights thus unveiled. He resolutely sets Himself to instruct the spiritual understanding, to captivate the moral imagination, to purify the heart with noble passions, to invigorate the will, to create a conscience, to fill the soul with divine thoughts, affinities, and aspirations. Christ was a great moral idealist. He came with neither sword nor sceptre; He had nothing new to suggest in social or political science; He did not intermeddle with

the structure and government of communities; He sought to effect nothing by scholarship and philosophy. For once Renan spoke truly when he said, "Jesus taught nothing but Himself." Nothing about art, literature, philosophy, arms, industrialism, government; He set before the race His own rich Personality overflowing with love, luminous with truth, pulsating with moral power, knowing that thus only could the secret fatal wound of humanity be reached and healed, and all things be brought into a state of health and harmony. The Cross is the symbol of pure thought; it is the truth, love, righteousness of God, appealing to the reason, heart, and conscience of the race. The New Testament is filled with this idea—the renewal of all things through the renewal of the soul. By distrust we fell, by faith we rise; ruined by a look, by a look must we be made whole; by the vision of the beauty of forbidden things were we made disobedient, by the vision of the beauty of noble things must we be made righteous; through a false heart we were betrayed, through a heart of love will the lost Paradise be restored. The epic of life is the epic of the heart.

1. We must remember the inwardness and spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin *in the culture of our personal life.*

We see here the necessity for that regeneration upon which Christ insists. The heart is the fountain of evil; it must be changed and become the fountain of good. "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." It is not a new brain that we need; the most logical intellect will not save us. It is not new members that we need; new eyes, or hands, or lips, or tongue, or feet, will not avail us. It is not new conditions that we need; the most

serene, unexacting, ideal states of actual life will not make us virtuous or prove us to be so. We need all the faculties and powers of our inward being renewing. We need our conscience to bear us witness in the Holy Ghost; our imagination to eye supremest ideals of light and beauty, and urge its flight thitherto as the eagle seeks the sun; our will by virtue of a divine strengthening to become imperative and invincible; our affections to be filled, dominated by the sovereign love of God. Nothing but this new heart and right spirit will meet the case. The regeneration of the man himself is the supreme burden of revelation. Brethren, it is for want of appreciating this fact that the moral life of many is so unsatisfactory to them. They seek to reform themselves, to educate themselves into true righteousness; but they have never gone back to the heart, and known that out of its humbling, warming, purifying, are the issues of life. Let us begin here, and all will be well. Out of the heart shall proceed good thoughts, and out of them all fair and noble characteristics and actions. Hear the words of the Lord, through the lips of the prophet, "Make you a new heart and a right spirit." Hear the voice of the Lord Himself, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

And the perfecting of character throughout must be from within—must be worked out in sanctified thought, feeling, and will. Says Jacob Boehme in a deep passage, "All now depends on what I set my imagination upon." Setting his imagination upon the kingdom of God, upon the highest objects, patterns, and callings of the spiritual universe, the believer conquers successively all selfishness and sensuality, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. All depends upon what we set our imagination—upon the

ideals we choose, upon the vivid realization of those ideals, upon the daily striving toward those ideals, upon the faithful confiding surrender of the soul to those ideals. Sin is to be attacked indirectly rather than immediately; in the abstract rather than the concrete; in the thought rather than in the act and habit. Let no man think lightly of the power of thought in the perfecting of character. "Set your thoughts on things which are above, not on things which are on the earth." Very lightly do some think of the energy of thought, and they permit their mind to contemplate low and stained scenes in the realm of fiction, when they would shrink with horror from a similar contact with contagion in the physical sphere.

> "Then let your secret thoughts be fair;
> They have a vital part and share
> In shaping worlds, and moulding fate;
> God's system is so intricate."

Let us set our thought on Christ, who is the Sum of all beauty, and that beauty shall dawn in us. Let no man seeking holiness think lightly of the power of sympathy. We see what wonderful effects sympathy will produce in the body, and it accomplishes marvellous transformations of character. Let no man bent on the full sanctification of life think lightly of the power of will. This is the will of God, even our sanctification, and when we will the same end a power works in us that nothing may withstand. He who in the culture of character despises love, sympathy, trust, reverence, hope, and trusts everything to an austere discipline of the outer life, is like the boor who despises the imponderables and who seeks to do all the work of the world with handspikes and crowbars. He who despises sentiment, and he who despises the imponderables, may

seem practical men, but both ignore the master-forces of the world.

2. We must remember the spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin as we attempt *the renovation of the world.* It is the habit of some reformers to think very slightingly of what they are pleased to consider the sentimentalism of Christianity. But was not Christ right in trusting everything to the power of sanctified thought and feeling? The history of the world is the history of thought. The catastrophe of the race arose in thought—in a thought from beneath. "And when the woman saw." Out of that look, imagination, desire, arose the vast tragedy. The great redeeming system began in a thought—in a thought from above. "It came into his heart to visit his brethren." Out of that generous thought arose the whole magnificent history of Israel. Nothing seems of less consequence than a thought—so silent, swift, subtle, is it, and yet in that lightning-flash of the brain, in that throb of the heart, in that fiat of the will, in that airy nothing, all the vast things of man's history, its grandeur and its grief, have their birth. The heart of man is the gateway of strange worlds, and through it are ever gliding thoughts fraught with infinite consequence to the individual and to the race. Let not the Church of God abandon that appeal to reason, to conscience, to the hearts of men, which is the true preaching of the gospel of Christ. Let the missionary still go to the heathen chiefly relying upon the Book that is in his hand. To appeal to the soul with lofty truths may seem remote and doubtful, and we may be tempted to try more tangible instruments and shorter cuts; but, in the end, the method of Christ and of His apostles will prove the most effective. If, as Plato said, a change in the music of a

State will be followed by changes in its constitution; if, as Darwin laid down the law, the habit of thought transforms the physical habit; shall not blessed national purifications and transformations follow the setting forth of the eternal truths, the commanding ideals, the conquering energy of the gospel of Christ? The real springs from the ideal; the ideal ultimately remodels the man, remodels the world.

THE LIMITATION OF EVIL.

THE LIMITATION OF EVIL.

"Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest."
—JER. iii. 5.

THE theologian is sometimes accused of being angry because in actual life men do not turn out as black as he paints them. The pulpit has much to say about the deep and bitter depravity of human nature, but the facts of society, it is alleged, do not bear out the preacher's representations. Mankind at large have more virtue than vice; good actions are more frequent than bad ones; there is clearly in our nature, the objector continues, a preponderance of innate good over evil. Men have many and serious faults, yet as a rule, it is maintained, they are far from being the monsters that the doctrine of total depravity would lead us to expect. Still we venture to think it will not be difficult to show that the weakness and perversity imputed to us by revelation are in no wise exaggerated, although the fact of such depravity is not always conspicuous.

I. We indicate some of *the restraining influences of life.* "As thou couldest." The people of God had not spoken and done evil things to the utmost; they had not carried out evil to the same lengths that their neighbours had; by a divine and gracious system of checks they had been preserved from this practical excess. And we too are withheld

by merciful limitations from carrying into effect the fulness of the evil of our heart. By many considerations we are restrained from fulfilling the evil impulses and designs of which we are conscious; our potential wickedness is not allowed to become actual. When those restraining influences are suspended, theologians have little reason to be angry at the lightness of the moral hue.

1. There is the restraint imposed by *revelation*. The possession of God's Word was a grand discipline to the people of Israel. "What advantage then hath the Jew? . . . Much every way: first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God." To know the moral perfections of God, to discern the moral significance of human life, to possess the moral law expressed with such clearness, fulness, and force, was a rare privilege. This was the grand circumscription that kept Israel back from the things of lust and cruelty and shame which defiled and destroyed their heathen neighbours. Speaking of the terrible vices of the Gentiles, Moses says, "For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee." And, addressing Israel, he immediately adds, "But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." That Israel did not fall into the flagrant wickedness of the surrounding nations was not the consequence of their innate strength or goodness—the Lord their God restrained them. The voices of Sinai ringing in their ears warned and strengthened them against the destructive errors of paganism. Are we not to-day restrained by the same gracious influence? Our poet speaks of "the silver streak" that comes between us and the Continent, delivering our nation from fears, wars, and contagions. Is not that reve-

lation which is in the hands of all our countrymen a silver streak coming between us and contemporaneous paganism? That we are preserved from the senseless beliefs, the degrading worship, the shameless immoralities of India, China, Persia, is not owing on our part to superior intellectual powers, or a finer instinctive moral sense, or a more vivid religious nature, but to the fact that God has been pleased to give us His holy law, thereby enlightening, admonishing, strengthening us. Despite all the blandishments of our civilization we are pagan at heart, and the divine page is the precious streak of silver coming between us and the gross follies, the filthy gods, the festering plagues of heathendom. Again and again, when individuals and communities repudiate revelation, when they break its bands asunder and cast away its cords from them, do we see how much barbarism there is still in us, and how much we owe of our civilization to the doctrines and hopes of the Christian faith.

2. There is the restraint imposed by *grace*. The direct divine action on our mind, will, conscience, feeling. This was the master-restraint of the antediluvian world. When the earth was corrupt and filled with violence, God's Spirit was striving with men, seeking with intensest action to save them from sinking in the sensual mire. So has the selfsame Spirit striven in all hearts, and in all generations. This is another "silver streak," a sea of glass mingled with fire, coming between us and the shores of darkness. Is it objected that we are now dealing with what is simply theological and mystical? Our appeal is to the testimony of consciousness. Is not the action of the Divine Spirit dwelling within us, pleading with us, restraining us,—is not this gracious action one of the clearest, as it is one of the

most solemn, facts of life? We have been vividly conscious of it in the days of our inexperience, of our weakness, of our unwatchfulness; we remember its admonitions and beseechings in our blind days, our weak days, our mad days. Through all the ignorance, the unreasonableness, the wilfulness of our life have we been conscious of His generous action, subduing our vain thoughts, checking the wandering of our will, quenching passion's kindling fire. As a horse is held in by bit and bridle, as a ship on some rocky coast is held by her anchor, so have we all in dangerous days been restrained and delivered by the Spirit of grace. Let men quench that Spirit, and the disastrous consequence is soon revealed. The apostle speaks of those who are "past feeling," that is, of men who have driven the Spirit of God out of their breast. What follows upon this expulsion? "Who have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Then it is seen whether human nature is not as black as theology paints it. We do not go to excess of riot; we do not work out our passions and imaginations of evil; we do not demonstrate our essential wickedness; because of a Power not ourselves; because the Spirit of God dwells in us, convincing, shaming, alluring, fortifying us.

3. There is the restraint imposed by *society*. Our civilization, which is the grace of God organized, is full of restraining influences to which we owe far more than we sometimes think. There is the restraint of the civil law. We owe much of our common public morality to the pressure and menace of civil law. If all the criminal laws were suddenly repealed by some revolutionary authority, and all men were left to do what was right in their own eyes, would it then be found that theology had done any injustice to

human nature? There is the restraint of public opinion. The Africans say that the bite of a serpent is less dangerous if it be witnessed by many spectators—the presence of watching eyes is supposed to attenuate the poison; without doubt, the vigilant eyes about us in daily life often check the working of the black poison that is in our blood. There is the restraint of social etiquette. Desiring to appear gentlemen, we mortify our vanity, temper, covetousness, lust. There is the restraint of our business. We are often impatient with the monotony and fatigue of our daily task, but it has an immense practical moral value. There are the restraints of domesticity. Very preservative of our best qualities are the sweet ties and sacred obligations of the family. All these laws, institutions, duties, relationships, are "silver streaks" coming between us and alien hosts. What dire consequences follow the suspension of these restraints! We are assured that the excesses of young men in Johannesburg who find themselves suddenly free from the restraints of European civilization are truly terrible. Sailors left on savage coasts often become more vile than the heathen. And the story that so recently engaged public attention respecting the atrocities of Stanley's rear-guard shows what the polite, scientific, artistic Englishman is when, removed from the criticism of civilization, he gives free play to his nature. And the atrocities of the rear-column were not isolated, single, sporadic outrages, confined to a single camp, but many previous acts of wanton and horrible cruelty have been committed by our countrymen. "The human brain is a more terrible weapon than the lion's paw." Yes, indeed, the cultivated brain of the gentleman, of the scientist, of the artist. The moral of the African episode is, that we are as black as the theologian

paints us. If it should be suggested that the laws, institutions, and proprieties of society which forbid excess are themselves expressions of the moral sense, it will at once be palpable to most that these circumscriptions are dictated by fear, policy, and selfishness rather than by any love of righteousness for its own sake. That one wolf holds another wolf in check must not be construed to mean that we are a flock of lambs.

II. *Notwithstanding the restraints of life, we discover the wickedness of our nature by going as far as possible in the direction of transgression.* "Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest." Israel had not actually been as licentious as the Egyptian, the Assyrian, or the Phœnician, but they had trespassed as far as they dared. There was, of course, a sense in which they could have broken through and done outrageously, but they went as far as they might without incurring immediate and capital loss. Men have power to fling themselves into the fire, to throw themselves over a precipice, but for obvious reasons they usually stop short of these desperate deeds. So Israel hitherto had abstained from the extreme acts of transgression which would have involved immediate retribution, but they showed their disposition by playing with the fire, by trifling on the edge of the abyss. So in these days we show what we really are by going as far as we dare or can in actual disobedience. We go as far as our material will permit. Sinners sometimes plume themselves on the fact that they have not gone to excess as some other sinners have done, but the simple truth is that the pharisaical transgressor had not the same abundance of material and resource. They are

> "Wicked but in will, of means bereft."

And not the less wicked, therefore, because of the comparative triviality of their crimes. We go as far as our opportunity permits. The lively manner in which we have used our rarer opportunities to sin shows that increased leisure and facility would only have exaggerated our misdoing. Gray reminds us how the lot of many prevented them from displaying great virtues, splendid patriotism, brilliant eloquence, but he justly reminds us that such limitation had its side of advantage.

> "Nor circumscribed alone
> Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
> Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of Mercy on mankind;
>
> "The struggling pangs of conscious Truth to hide,
> To quench the blushes of ingenuous Shame,
> Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
> With incense kindled at the Muse's flame."

We go as far as our ability will permit. As Ibsen says, "It needs both force and earnestness to sin," and we often stop short of splendid sins, historic sins, tragic sins, because we are deficient in the strength and boldness of character which render such sins possible. We go as far as our provocations urge. As Ruskin writes, "The virtues of the inhabitants of many country districts are apparent, not real; their lives are indeed artless, but not innocent; and it is only the monotony of circumstances, and the absence of temptation, which prevent the exhibition of evil passions not less real because often dormant, nor less foul because shown only in petty faults or inactive malignities." There have been plenty of petty injustices, peculations, duplicities, revenges, infidelities, in our life, and increased facility, resource, talent, force, opportunity, would only have given greater proportion to our sin, without, however, increasing its

malignity and guilt. Ours is not the abominable sin of Sodom, because we have lived in Leeds, Manchester, and London; we are not chargeable with the crimson crimes of Nero, because we were never master of a Roman palace; we have not the bloodguiltiness of Napoleon, because we have not Napoleon's mighty force of character.

"As thou couldest." As thou couldest with impunity. We are intemperate with a due regard to our health; freer indulgence would destroy us, and that is not what we mean. We are uncharitable with a due regard to our reputation; we must not infringe the law of libel. We are ambitious and vain; but our ostentation must be limited by considerations of pride and covetousness. As thou couldest with decency. We must not qualify our reputation; we must not be guilty of bad manners, bad form, bad taste. As thou couldest with advantage. Carrying out unrighteousness right up to the point where it ceases to be lucrative, and breaking it off just there. And let none conclude that sins toned down by considerations of policy and taste are of a less malignant quality, or that they are less offensive before God, than are sins of a more violent or exaggerated order. The reflection, forethought, taste, resolution, implied in this limitation of evil seems to give it a less repulsive and sinister character, but if we yield to any such view we simply flatter ourselves in our own eyes until our iniquity is found to be hateful. Do we think the less of a sin because it is committed in cold blood, and cleverly disguised and fenced from detection and punishment? On the contrary, we rather feel the sin to be the more excusable that has been committed in passion, that has been wrought out with least deliberation, that sought least to disguise itself; the haste, thoughtlessness, recklessness of the act

dispose us to a more lenient judgment. It is fortunately not our duty to arbitrate between these alternative views of the comparative heinousness of specific sins, but certainly we cannot think lightly of sin conditioned by considerations of mere economy, safety, respectability, taste. The presence of the regulative principle of selfishness serenely asserting itself everywhere in a vicious career; the chastening of desire at the prompting of purely prudential considerations; the cool balancing of evils in the scales of the practical judgment; the long and intricate calculation as to how we may secure the fullest gratification of our baser self with the least sacrifice of wealth and honour;—these are not things to make us think more tolerantly of transgression, or of the nature by which such transgression is prompted. Subtlety is not reason; prudence is not righteousness; and although a man may be less of a fool for seeking the gratification of his baser self politically, he is certainly not the less a sinner. The Master has not one word of extenuation for the arithmetical virtue of the Pharisee; it even shocks Him more than the open blunt sin of the Publican.

III. It is sufficiently clear that *many would at once proceed to greater lengths of wickedness if the restrictive influences of life were withdrawn.*

1. Note the extent to which men *resist these saving influences.* We have spoken of "the silver streak" coming between us and the errors and passions of other places and periods. Now as some engineers are wishful to drive a tunnel under the Channel and establish immediate relations with the Continent, so men are busy in all directions ingeniously attempting to evade the silver streaks which Heaven has mercifully placed between them and the excesses of passion and appetite. Is not much of the criticism directed

against the Scriptures inspired by a secret discontent with its moral restrictions? Many critics, no doubt, are influenced by more legitimate considerations; but they are not few who seek to discredit revelation in the interests of a lower and not of a higher morality. Many who are discontented with the Bible, who are ready to find fault with it, who welcome new objections to its authority, who are rejoiced to discover some fresh difficulty in its contents or history, will find the secret of their hostility in an unspoken desire for a larger licence of life. The criticism of the Bible in the literary world, the impatience felt with it in the individual life, are frequently nothing more than a revolt against its noble righteousness, although such a revolt may not in the least confess its true character. We fret at the narrowness of the way which leadeth unto life. Do we not also resist the Holy Spirit by whose gracious influence we are admonished and restrained? Far from welcoming His benign action on our heart, we often vex the Spirit, and are vexed by Him. He comes between us and the gratification of flesh and mind, and we resent His interference. The conscience bearing witness against us in the Holy Ghost is what we cannot endure. With a true appreciation of the preciousness of the indwelling grace the psalmist prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me;" but in temper and action we often urge the dreadful supplication, "Take Thy Holy Spirit from me." We resolutely seek to drown His voice; we spurn the patterns He shows us; we do our best to extinguish the pure and kindly fire by which He seeks to refine and perfect us. Opportunity no longer permits us to stone the prophets, or to crucify the Son of man, but we reveal the same hatred of truth and righteousness by doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Do not many of

us also resent the stringency of society? A not inconsiderable section of the community constantly and boldly agitate for freer conditions of life. They protest against Puritanism; they scorn the officialism which cramps us; they demand complete emancipation from the fetich-worship of Respectability, from the despotism of Bumbledom. These advocates of libertinism acknowledge that there is more political liberty in England than there is on the Continent, but the reverse is true, they say, regarding questions of morals and sociology, and they plead for the abolition of "that Bumbleism which at every point checks and thwarts the production of thoughtful and outspoken writings."[1] In the name of free thought, of a free press, of free institutions, the nude in art must be encouraged, "outspoken" writings protected, the theatre must receive a wider licence, sexual life must be unfettered. With what strange infatuation do we rebel against and seek to escape the crystal deep which God has established between us and ruin!

2. And the second sign of *the irregularity and inordinativeness of our desire is found in the popularity of certain imaginative literature.* Modern society, as we have already seen, has put distinct and authoritative limits to many forms of indulgence; but human nature shows its old quality unchanged, for when it can no longer gratify itself in the actual world, it betakes itself to the ideal world. The Winter Garden at St. Petersburg is an attempt to find a compensation for those summer landscapes which climate denies to the Russian; the lark singing from its little cage in Seven Dials is a pathetic attempt on the part of the city poor to restore in some measure the rural delights they may no longer share; and just as certainly do we seek in our

[1] James Thompson.

literature to compensate ourselves for liberties and pleasures denied or curtailed by civilization. In the literature of fiction we find gratifications which the changes of the times have rendered impossible in actual life. In the wonderfully vivid painting of our realists; in their splendid pictures of wealth and power; in their suggestive handling of dark impulses and desires; in their delicate rendering of the delicious hues of passion; in the subtle way in which they call up the sensations of guilty pleasure; in their dramatization of evil, giving it magnificence, dignity, excuse; in the skilful plot which keeps the heart in a state of agitation; the student, without leaving his quiet chamber, may enjoy all the ignoble delights of luxury, pride, foulness, vanity, hate, and revenge. In the realistic romance of to-day Sodom rises like an exhalation from the ground, gleaming through splendid words as once through palms and flowers; Pompeii emerges from its ashes on the shore of the blue sea; Babylon, Sybaris, Cyprus, glow again in purple light, holding forth to the lips of a strange generation the wine of their fornication. Here the soul, freed from the hated restraints of austere social regulations, satiates itself in unlimited excitement. Here is no police, no magistrate, no public opinion, no stigma, no penalty. Now, "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he," and the undisguised pleasure which multitudes are now finding in abominable literature shows that human nature is still much the dark thing it has been painted, and it indicates also that if any fatal revolution threw down the safeguards of our civilization, we should soon convert into fact what now we so eagerly picture in fancy.

Here, then, it is seen that human nature is not lightly or unjustly impeached. We could not perpetrate many

evils because we were caged in by circumstance, but we have shown our disposition by thrusting our claws as far beyond the bars as possible; we have been held back from presumptuous sins and utter shipwreck, but as a ship in a storm frets against her anchor, so have we often strained the preventing grace of God well-nigh to the breaking. We have done evil as we could; then we have sympathetically contemplated it in imagination; and at last have been vexed that we were not allowed to be as wicked as we should have liked to be.

We conclude with a few practical reflections.

(1) Let us recognize *the glory of God's preventing grace.* The Dutch call the chain of dykes which protects their fields and their firesides from the wild sea, "the golden border." God's grace directly affecting our heart, or expressed in the constitution of society and the circumstances of life, is a golden border shutting out a raging threatening sea of evil. Oh! what might we not have been in sin and misery had not this strong shining border come between us and the cruel deep which lifts up its voice! "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Let us respect and use the saving grace. It is said to be scarcely possible to induce working men engaged in dangerous employments to take the most rudimentary precautions against disease and accident. The knife-grinder neglects his mask, the collier his lamp; they are ingenious in evading the regulations framed for their safety. And similarly in our recklessness

and presumption we ignore the things which are designed to secure the safety of our character, the peace of our soul. Let us be sure that we prize those manifold and gracious arrangements by which God seeks to save us from the power of evil, that we profit by them to the utmost. Let no pride, carelessness, venturesomeness, lead us to treat lightly the securities of virtue. The best man, the strongest, the safest, must tremble and respect the golden border.

(2) Let us confess *the folly of our self-righteousness.* The consciousness of a self-righteousness often stands in the way of men attaining the righteousness which is of God, but the foregoing reflections show how little our self-righteousness may be worth. The fact that the evil of our life has been less extravagant is not a consequence of our intrinsic merit, our better disposition and purpose, but rather of the slenderness of our resources, the fewness of our chances, the feebleness of our provocations. Geological "faults" are said rarely to give rise to any feature on the surface of the ground; the faults may be both extensive and serious, yet no yawning crack or irregular depression at the surface gives any indication of their existence. So faults of character may exist, very real, very radical and profound, without revealing themselves obtrusively on the surface; the action of the weather in one case, the pressure of society in the other, smoothing the surface and concealing underlying irregularities of the most serious nature. Looking into our heart, we know ourselves to be worse than the world takes us to be. As Victor Hugo expresses it, "Our dark side is unfathomable. . . . One of the hardest labours of the just man is to expunge from his soul a malevolence which it is difficult to efface. Almost all our desires, when examined, contain what we dare not avow." We have

done evil as we could, and if we did no more, the cause of our moderation was often rather external than interior. But we must know that the apparently insignificant transgression contains the whole dark principle of sin. More falsehood, more malice, more devilishness, often find vent on an anonymous halfpenny post-card, than go to thefts which send men to prison, to murders which send them to the gallows. He who regards the heart can see the terrible principle in the petty act; larger or more fitting opportunity was alone wanting to make the tragedy. And in the one point where we fail the just Judge can see the guilt of all transgressions. "She hath done what she could," said Christ of the woman who gave her all. Gracious truth! The little that is faithfully done God accepts for the doing of all noble things. But is not the other side true? If "She hath done what she could" be taken as the sum of all good, will not "She hath done what she could" be taken as the sum of all evil? Truly our righteousness is the one thing about us that will the least bear scrutiny. "We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." "God be merciful unto me, a sinner."

(3) We see *the necessity and urgency of the grace which converts and perfects.* It is by no means wholly satisfactory that we are kept by restraining grace; we must go on to seek the grace which renews. Only with deep thankfulness can we regard the influences, doctrines, and institutions which save us from ourselves and from the power and subtlety of surrounding evil; but the grace which converts us into a new self is what we must most earnestly covet and pursue. Without this hallowing grace we are like the master of a castle ruling by force and fear, whilst the

dungeon below is full of plotting prisoners ready at any moment to burst into furious revolt; or, we resemble a ship at sea with a fire smouldering in the hold: the hatches are battened down, but the smoke issuing at many places shows how easily the catastrophe might be precipitated. This will not do. The dungeon must be emptied and filled with light; the fire must be quenched, and the hold filled with a fragrant freight. We must rest only in the grace which gives us a new heart and a right spirit. A celebrated writer says justly, "Christ raised the feeling of humanity from being a feeble restraining power to be an inspiring passion. The Christian moral reformation may, indeed, be summed up in this—humanity changed from a restraint to a motive."[1] The New Testament is full of this dynamic idea; of the indwelling power which gives purity, safety, victory. Whenever in one line it inhibits evil in any shape, in the next it reminds us of the spiritual energy by which all righteousness may be fulfilled. Christianity brings us a motive of unparalleled grandeur; it fills the soul with the highest visions, convictions, loves, ambitions. And there is a sublime concurrence of forces in its motive. It is a new force working in all the nobler instincts of our humanity; it is a new force in the intellect; it is a new force in the conscience; it is a new force in the affections. We may find elsewhere motives to touch, to kindle, this or the other faculty of our nature; but the supremest motive, the motive that shall arouse, inspire, fortify, every gift and power of our complex being, can only be found in the gospel of Christ, and it is found there in its fulness. This is the sum of the Christian reformation, and upon this it depends. Other moral reformations may be content to restrain their

[1] "Ecce Homo."

disciples from overt acts of wickedness, but Christ is content only when the kingdom of God is established within His followers, when the sovereignty of righteousness and love has been set up in their heart. The perfection of life is from within. Let us earnestly seek this thought, affection, energy, which only the Saviour's presence can excite and sustain. "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

The Christian reformer, too, must not be content with the limitation and suppression of evil in society; he must feel that there, as well as in his personal life, inward regeneration and constraint are the final motives of his faith. In the old days the gutters were open in the streets, but in modern towns they are put underground; so society is always forcing vices and abuses underground, covering them up by a variety of regulations that they no longer shock the public sense. Still, on occasion, the covered drain may prove its deadly virtue, and the covered sin of the community is still there, working and threatening mischief. "At all times the undying savage in the soul of man has been quick to revive and to reassert itself in myth. Spiritual philosophies die and decay, and in their twilight the earliest and the rudest creeds, spiritualism, polytheism, fetichism, mystic mummery and magic, again and again reappear. They creep out from the huts of peasants, and from the battered fanes of half-forgotten rural gods; and from dark corners of the soul they return to life. Man can

never be certain that he has expelled the savage from his temples and from his heart."[1] The Christian reformer must seek to make it certain that he does expel the savage from the heart of man. Christ has made us to know that that savage is not "undying." "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Whilst thankful for every political check to sin, for every legal restraint, for any and every social discouragement of insobriety, greed, or impurity, let us ardently seek that the deepest channels of human life may be cleansed, and that thence may spring all the fair things of society, as the water-lilies spring from the crystal deeps.

[1] Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion."

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVIL.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVIL.

"For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."—2 Cor. xi. 14.

If the evil that assails us were as frightful in its aspect as it is in its essence, we should run little danger from its assaults; but too often it besets us in fair forms and in dazzling colours, and herein lies our peril. It discloses itself as something different from evil, something far removed from evil, or even as something altogether good and beautiful. We shrink from the gorilla, the tiger, the wolf, the crocodile, the rattlesnake, the shark, the scorpion, the centipede, the hornet, the leech, the vulture—we are afraid of these creatures of loathsomeness and blood; and in a very similar way we shrink from the vices undisguised. But just as the Oriental superstitiously invests destructive beasts with a certain glamour, refusing to destroy the tiger, respecting the vulture as sacred, decorating the crocodile with jewels, consecrating shrines for serpents; so the vices attain a certain glamour in our eyes, becoming positively lovely, sacred, angelic. We now propose to distinguish several ways in which this transfiguration of evil is effected, and to indicate the path of safety amid these dangerous illusions.

I. *The transfiguration of evil.*

1. Evil is transfigured by *imagination.* One of the naturalists writes concerning "the beautiful methods of killing the delicate inhabitants of the sea," which have been invented in modern times. What beautiful methods there are for killing the delicate inhabitants of the land, for destroying the life that is most precious of all! By imagination's aid souls are lured into corruption, misery, ruin. This seduction is sometimes wrought by poetry. The bard poisons us with roses; robes corruption in cloth of gold; makes death speak like life; strews the pathway of despair with flowers. Our fiction abounds with this misrepresentation. Atheism has signally failed in practical life to produce beautiful characters — its biographies are terribly disappointing; but the novels of scepticism are producing magnificent characters—indeed, it may be confessed that their paper saints are of an ideal perfection. In our fiction also immoral characters are often made to appear altogether heroic and charming. And in many other directions literary artists gild and glorify wickedness. How artfully intemperance has been metamorphosed into shapes actually delightful to contemplate! Teetotal songs thrill nobody, but the singing inspired by wine is as intoxicating as the wine itself. Bacchus marches accompanied by choicest songs, sweetest music, liveliest mirth. It is the same with war. Poets, orators, historians, have treated the battle-field so eloquently that the victories of peace look pale compared with the victories of war. We noticed a village the other day where the slaughter-house had been cleverly concealed by trees and evergreens; and the slaughter-house of the nations has been similarly hidden by flowers of rhetoric. Libertinism is often made to glow with delusive lustre. All the resources of feeling, fancy, and language

are taxed to make a loose life appear a gay, a brilliant, a free, a delightful thing. In nature we see sometimes the dirtiest puddles tinged with bits of rainbow; oftener still in literature.

Imagination is ever active in many ways and in many places, lending to evil things a fictitious splendour. Bates found on the Amazon a brilliant spider that spread itself out as a flower, and the insects lighting upon it seeking sweetness, found horror, torment, death. Such transformations are common in human life; things of poison and blood are everywhere displaying themselves in forms of innocence, in dyes of beauty. The perfection of mimicry is in the moral world, deceiving the very elect. Satan is transformed into an angel of light; his blasted brow is disguised by a wreath, his fiery darts seem glittering sceptres, the smoke of his torment goes up as incense. Sin rarely comes as ugliness, disease, death; in the masquerade of life it is the cunningest dissembler of all, flattering our vanity, confusing our judgment, firing our passions. A certain legend relates that one of the Biscayan mountains is accursed, and that Satan dwells there. The grass is withered, a sinister hue rests upon everything, the sounds are mournful, the mountain stands a dark phantom in the midst of bedecked nature. But this is not the method of evil. The mountain up which the devil took our Master, and up which he takes us, is bathed in purple; in its rocks gleam jewels, its dust is the dust of gold, in its clefts spring flowers, and from its crest is seen the vision of kingdoms and the glory of them. Things, principles, maxims, amusements, relationships, creeds, ideals, utterly base and vile, are through the power of imagination purged into the lily's whiteness, perfumed with the violet, steeped in the colour

of the rose. We are never invited to sin; the things which have ruined generations are pressed upon us as nature, freedom, spirit, knowledge, gallantry, beauty, love, and we are deceived through the legerdemain of passion and fancy.

2. Evil is transfigured by *philosophy*.

(1) In matters of *faith* and *worship* we may be misled by philosophy. There is a certain peril in rationalism. The Apostle in this very place is speaking on the question of faith. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." The truth of Christ has nothing to fear from true philosophy; but the Apostle speaks of a philosophy falsely so called, and the truth of Christ has a great deal to fear from this. There is a philosophy which explains the Gospel in the sense of worldliness. It does not attack the faith of Christ as a false thing, but it regards Christianity as a valuable system for realizing this world. It is favourable to the health of the people; it is the friend of temperance; it encourages economy; it enjoins principles which foster trade; its influence on government is for good. It is a prudential system of the first efficacy. Supposing that gain is godliness, they patronize the Christian faith and organization as fine instruments of material aggrandizement and progress. All the spirituality, the sanctity, the heavenliness of Christian discipleship are tacitly ignored, and its profitableness is its grand recommendation. To many of us in the Church does Satan come thus transfigured, and under cover of securing us a larger slice of this world he attempts to cheat us out of the divinest elements of our faith. There is a philosophy which explains the Gospel in the sense of antinomianism. Under pretence of honouring

Christ, it transgresses that law of righteousness which He came to maintain and illustrate. Master-delusion this, that the devil should appear as the Angel of the Covenant, liberating the faithful from the obligation of the moral law! No depreciation of Christ, no criticism of His teaching, no rejection of any of the grand distinctive doctrines of evangelical religion; no, these are dwelt upon with rapture, and exaggerated and misinterpreted in the interests of unrighteousness. Supremest and most fatal parody! There is a philosophy which explains the Gospel in the sense of unbelief. False apostles, deceitful workers, urge their theories as the doctrines of Christ, whilst the essentials of the faith are entirely lacking in those theories. In the name of reason, of independence, of progress, we are exhorted to conclusions which make the cross of Christ of none effect. Many have philosophized about the Gospel until they have embraced despair. Travellers in the East are mocked by splendid mirages until they will not believe in the real palms and streams when they see them; and many forsaking the simplicity that is in Christ, and following first one and then another dazzling theory, come at last to absolute unbelief and hopelessness. Atheism comes not stark and terrible as it really is, but as an angel of light.

And we may philosophize about the Church until we find ourselves embracing superstition. The Church itself may become a siren alluring us away from Him who alone is the sinner's peace and hope. Writing to the Hebrew Christians, the Apostle admonishes them, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The special way in which they were liable to deception through sin was that they should be tempted to renounce their simple faith

in Christ, and to return to an ancient and magnificent ecclesiasticism. Their deep unsophisticated feeling told them that they had found the bright reality in Christ, but they were in danger of arguing themselves out of the treasure they had found. Satan came to them in the sacred paraphernalia of a dead religion, and the danger was lest through reasoning and sentiment they should loose their hold of the living Christ. Is there no peril of this in our day? May not the Church become a snare to us? Indeed, we may think about and discuss orders, sacraments, methods, rituals, governments, until we utterly miss the heart of the whole thing—the knowledge of Christ's love, the participation of His Spirit, the revelation of His image in our character and life. Never is sin more subtly deceitful than when it deceives and slays us through the Church. The light that leads astray is never light from heaven, but there is a sacerdotal phosphorescence that may easily be taken for the guiding pillar, and this leads into ruinous wilds. Christ saves, and Christ alone, and we must beware lest any transfiguration of ecclesiasticism whatever should hide the Lord from our eyes.

(2) In matters of *conduct* we may be misled by philosophy. What unsophisticated men regard with simple abhorrence, clever reasoners can show has a good side to it; it has its reason and its compensation; they contrive to give it quite a scientific colour. Take, for instance, the question of improvidence. A recent writer says, "Indirectly the poor man who brings forth children he cannot feed is a public benefactor; he renders the struggle of life more acute, and by that means stimulates the energies of his race."[1] The simple-minded would instinctively feel

[1] Nisbet, "Marriage and Heredity."

that a man who flings a family on the world with the vague hope that somehow it will be provided for, is a shameless wretch, one who is entirely a disgrace and burden to civilization; but philosophy finds in the improvident father a patriot, a philosopher, a humanitarian—one who renders a service to society by rendering the struggle of life more acute, who stimulates the energies of his race; one who would be decorated by a gold medal if the world only knew its benefactors. Take the question of intemperance. Ordinary people would say straight off that intemperance was an unmitigated evil. But the philosopher can see in this appalling vice a public benefit. Mr. Matthieu Williams' contention is, "That all human beings who are fit to survive as members of a civilized community will spontaneously avoid intemperance, whilst those who are incapable of the general self-restraint demanded by advancing civilization, and who cannot share its moral and intellectual refinements, are provided by alcoholic beverages with the means of 'happy despatch,' and they will be gradually sifted out by natural alcoholic selection provided nobody interferes with their desire for a short life and a merry one."[1] So alcohol is a splendid instrument of civilization, eliminating the feebler members of the community; and its further benign action is displayed in clearing out heathen tribes, and in preparing the way for superior races. So the sot is an unconscious philosopher; drunkenness is one of nature's exquisite arrangements for keeping things up to the mark. Take the question of impurity. Mr. Sinclair says, "What we call prostitutes are not the worst, but generally the best, of the lower classes; people of fine physique (and as Spenser says, the soul, if it gets fair play, corresponds to the

[1] Ackroyd, "The History and the Science of Drunkenness."

body), who cannot get their true match in the sphere where born, and must, by the holiest of all instincts, that of truth, seek upward by any means."[1] What a different thing prostitution must seem when we have once persuaded ourselves that it is the result of holiest instinct seeking upward! Mr. Cotter Morison exalts "the barren prostitute" at the expense of "the prolific spouse." The *Fortnightly Review* has just reminded us that adultery may be regarded merely as a "new experiment in living." Mr. Lilly declares that one of the ugly symptoms of our day is "the apotheosis of prostitution, which is a distinctive note of our epoch."[2] So lust has contrived to disguise and adorn itself in the language of philosophy.

Take the question of war. Powerful and sincere writers vindicate war as natural, rational, necessary, inevitable. They assure us "that war, in a certain due degree, must be regarded as one of the good things of the world, and its so-called evils should be regarded as incidental, and as being of less moment than the good which it effects;" "it is a sacrifice to the cause of progress;" "it is a less good to bring about a greater good;" "it is as wholesome as a lightning-storm;" "the torch of war lights the beacon of civilization."[3] War is the school of virtue; it is the nurse of heroism; progress rides on the powder-cart. "We must fight like men, not like tigers," which really means we must fight like devils; and "the object of thoughtful men must be to refine war rather than to seek to abolish it." So the ghastly evil is justified by philosophy as it is adorned by poetry. With majestic simplicity St. James asks and answers the question, "Whence come wars and

[1] "Quest." [2] "Right and Wrong."
[3] James Ram, "The Philosophy of War."

fightings among you? come they not of your lusts which war in your members?" But philosophy forbids that we call war lust, pride, hate, injustice, inhumanity, murder, savagery, devilry; it is purely "the prosecution of Nature's plan for the advancement of the inhabitants of the earth to higher and higher forms of being." And not content with affirming that certain evils are "necessary evils," serving a larger or a higher good, philosophy boldly declares that there is no evil at all. Good and evil are to be regarded as different degrees of the same thing; the world is a mingled system, not of good and evil, but of greater good and lesser good. A heap of refuse fills us with disgust, but chemistry distils from the foul mass splendours and perfumes; so out of war, drink, prostitution, waste, violence, come all sorts of fine qualities, superiorities of character, riches of civilization. Here Satan receives his final apotheosis, his completest transfiguration—he is nature, he is reason, he is goodness, he is progress. The raiment of the transfigured Master was whiter than "any fuller on earth could whiten it." Yet these "fullers on earth" do some wonderful bleaching. They take the rags of laziness, the filthy robes of impudicity, the garments rolled in blood, the vesture of the drunkard stained with vomit, and if they do not make these whiter than snow, they at least make them highly respectable. The devil is never more dangerous than when transfigured in the light of science and philosophy, and he was never more glorified in that light than he is now.

3. Evil is transfigured by *society*. The world has many ways of hiding the false and the foul; many devices for making the false and foul quite alluring. The practical world is a great transformation scene, where the imp often

appears a fairy, and the beast, beauty. Sin is softened and silvered by the glozing language in which it is spoken of. Acts of revenge are vindicated when they are called "affairs of honour;" debt is innocency itself when known as "pecuniary obligation;" slavery has lost its horror when it reappears as "the peculiar institution," or as "a form of economic subordination;" social tyranny is beyond suspicion baptized as "exclusive dealing;" libertinism is purged of all taint when characterized as "gay life;" the most brutal gladiatorship has suffered a change into something rich and strange when it becomes "the noble art of self-defence;" and gluttony no longer disgusts when it is suggested as "a love of good things." Euphony plays off rare deceptions in the masquerade of life. Sin is often dangerously transformed in the fashions of society. Through ages society has gained an exquisite skill in enjoying the pleasures of sin whilst still stripping that sin of its grossness. Pride, lust, selfishness, indolence, gluttony, dishonesty, abound in the social circle, but the revolting features of these vices are lost under the paint and powder of fashion, the blandishments of taste, the lustre of gold, the affectations of courtesy, philanthropy, and piety. And never was there an age more dangerous in this respect than our own. In the customs of the world, too, evil is often transfigured. Injustice, fraud, selfishness, inhumanity, are so disguised in trade, in amusements, in politics, that thousands fail to recognize the dark reality. Satan is transformed into an angel of light—he appears appealingly as custom, law, pleasure, enterprise, patriotism.

But however oblique evil may be in its approach, however changed in its shape, whatever *alias* it may be known by, its action is equally ruinous. The arrow is not the less

fatal because it is shot from ambush, and winged with peacock's or eagle's feather. "Whose end shall be according to their works." At once are we deceived and destroyed. In the legend, the Duchess Isabella, wishing earnestly to obtain some object, was instructed by the crafty court astrologer to kiss day by day for a hundred days a certain beautiful picture, and she would receive the fulfilment of her wish. It was a sinister trick, for the picture contained a subtle poison which stained the lips with every salutation. Little by little the golden tresses of the queenly woman turned white, her eyes became dim, her colour faded, her lips became black; but, infatuated, the suicidal kiss was continued until before the hundred days were complete the royal dupe lay dead. So we yield ourselves to the sorcery of sin; despite many warnings, we persist in our fellowship with what seems truth, beauty, liberty, pleasure, until our whole soul is poisoned and destroyed. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

II. We indicate *the path of safety amid these dangerous illusions.*

1. Let us not forget that *the chief danger of life lies in this moral illusion.* It is often hard to persuade us that there is any such danger of deception; we have the feeling that vice is a horrible thing, and we flatter ourselves that we can immediately spot it, wherever, whenever, and however it may reveal itself. But such confidence is false, and places us in jeopardy. Life brings many deceptions with it, and it is the mark of an intelligent man to be on his guard against these deceptions. The scientist knows that the first testimony of the senses is not always to be relied upon; he believes his eyes, but takes great pains so that

he may be sure he sees truly. The connoisseur is equally careful; knowing the craft of men, he does not accept things because they are labelled with great names, but subjects the vase, the bronze, the picture, to a rigorous criticism. The business man knows the prevalence of trickery in his province, and acts warily. This need of caution is specially called for in the moral world. A celebrated naturalist tells us that one day he saw a bird drowning in a lake, and he felt sure that the bird had mistaken the water for the sky; it was a bright transparent day, the clear calm lake reflected the sky and the whole landscape in its depths, and the bird, not discerning that the world below it was a world of shadows, was betrayed to its doom. So all the glories of the upper world appear inverted in the world of evil. The lofty, the pure, the beautiful, the bright, are all seductively reflected in the depths of Satan; they are exaggerated there, they are seen in surpassing magnitude and splendour; error seems some nobler truth, disobedience some larger liberty, forbidden things seem the sweetest flowers and mellowest fruits of Paradise. So are incautious souls betrayed; they are deceived by the false images of high and noble things until they lose the power of their wings, and find themselves perishing in a grosser element. We need ever to be on the watch, seeing that Satan conceals his fell purposes under fair pretences, as the Greek assassins concealed their swords in myrtle branches. On watch over ourselves. That we "put away the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." On watch against those who would teach us. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." On

watch against the Church. The ecclesiastical sphere has its own most dangerous illusions. On watch against the world wherever it touches us. We must guard ourselves against the pride of knowledge, the deceitfulness of riches, the phantasms of greatness, the narcotism of worldliness, the hypnotism of beauty. Ruskin says that he is aware of no effort to represent the Satanic mind in the angelic form that has succeeded in painting; if so, painting must be the only medium in which the infernal element has not found angelic form, although we all know that it has found expression there also. The Bible is full of the idea of the deceitfulness of sin, it constantly represents temptation as sorcery, it is never weary of showing that life has become a maze of black arts; and so far from teaching that these illusions, shadows, mirages, are easily seen through, it declares that it is one of the most difficult tasks of life to see sin as sin, and to preserve ourselves from its blinding, corrupting, defiling magic.

2. Let us be *sincere in soul.* How much depends upon this sincerity of spirit! upon the integrity of our purpose in life! Very instructive on this point are the words of the Apostle to the Thessalonians: "Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Here was the secret of their deep blindness—they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Not only have

they not received the *Christian* truth presented to them; for it might be still conceivable that they highly esteemed *the truth itself* and felt themselves drawn to it, although in consequence of spiritual blindness they had not known and recognized *Christianity* as an embodiment and full expression of the truth; but they have not even received into their hearts the *love* of the truth under whatever form it may be presented to them; they have rendered themselves entirely *unsusceptible* of the truth, they have *hardened* themselves against it.[1] Under all the deception by which we are deceived is self-deception—a secret willingness to be deceived because we have pleasure in unrighteousness and purpose to follow it. This is often the simple reason why we cannot see through the sophistry of the heretic, the artifices of the tempter. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee," do we read of Edom in the vision of Obadiah. And at other times do we deceive our "own selves" by the impurity, the covetousness, the hatred, we cherish in our heart.

It is this fact that makes us guilty. "*And for this cause* God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie." We might be disposed to ask, Are we not to be pitied for this liability to deception? We are sorry for the bird caught by some glittering snare, for the fish lured by some appetizing bait, for the animal trapped in some cunningly prepared pit, and are we not to feel a similar but far keener sympathy with men and women and children ensnared by transfigured evil? But we cannot feel this sympathy with men because we know how they have contributed to their own ruin; had they lived in perfect sincerity of heart they could not have been thus

[1] Meyer.

victimized. An adventurer waits upon you one of these days and offers you on terms absurdly easy some diamond-field in Africa, or silver-mine in Nevada, or ruby-mine in Burmah—a few shares at a trifling cost will make you a millionaire. You are smitten, your brain is filled with pleasant dreams, and with the least investigation you invest your good money to find ere long that you have been cruelly deceived. Will the public greatly pity you? They will not. There was a personal moral fault at the bottom of your misfortune. You were willingly ignorant, you were easily blinded, because of your inordinate desires. So is it in all the temptations of life to which we fall a prey. A certain morbid disposition of soul is the secret of our loss or ruin. "The wicked one cometh, but he hath nothing in Me," said the Master; no temper of vanity, passion, anger, greed, was in Him, and so He was safe in every dangerous hour. Let us seek this integrity of soul and it shall preserve us. Let us vow with the psalmist, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness." The single-hearted are clear-eyed, and without blindness, presumption, confusion, haste, they find and keep the pathway of life. Sincerity, modesty, purity of spirit, will preserve us whenever Satan comes as an angel of light, enabling us to recognize the dark reality despite all paint, powder, and spangles, rendering us proof against all the magic, ventriloquism, necromancy, and palmistry of evil.

> "That which is not good, is not delicious
> To a well-govern'd and wise appetite."

3. Let us *respect the written Law.* The Bible is a

wonderful book for destroying the glamour of sin, for exposing its sophistries and lies. The Apostle in the Romans uses these words: "But sin, that it might appear sin." Now, that is the last thing that sin desires to do—to appear sin. It is wishful to appear anything but that, to be called by any name but that. It likes to be called by grand names when possible—spirit, liberty, breadth, greatness, manliness, gallantry, glory; it is partial to philosophical names—indecision, hesitation, limitation, imperfection, and the like; it is satisfied with apologetic epithets—ignorance, inexperience, infirmity, oversight, indiscretion, imprudence; it is rather partial to humorous names; it will consent to be known by equivocal names—cleverness, smartness, foxiness; it will even submit to such designations as foolishness, looseness, shabbiness; but it will not appear as *sin*, as the violation of the good and holy Law of God, with all that such violation implies. But the Law of God as given in revelation, searches out sin, compels it to declare itself, its name, its essence, its workings, its issues. It strips evil of its glamour, and shows it in its true and awful character.

Revelation makes palpable the *sophistry* of sin. It exposes the deceitfulness of the heart. John Morley says of Rousseau, "He had an amazing skill in finding a certain ingeniously contrived largeness for his motives." But we all have much of this skill and contrive this largeness of motive for the basest and most miserable acts. How revelation makes manifest the real thoughts of our heart, and discovers the falsity of those fine arguments of lust "prank'd in reason's garb"! How revelation strips away the pretences of philosophy! Just as a serene and logical judge follows some impassioned advocate, and mercilessly exposes his eloquent sophistry, stating coldly the real facts

of the case, the just sequence of events, the clear significance of the evidence, thereby destroying the whole force of the orator's dazzling spell which for awhile held and misled the court; so revelation searches out the vain rhetoric and sentiment of evil, exhibiting its profound irrationality, and frustrating the mighty eloquence of wickedness. Nothing is more wonderful than to pass from the philosophic page, where the reality and mischief of sin are hidden by dazzling fence, to the sacred page, where the same sin comes out in its naked horror, and the arguments that would justify or palliate it are seen to be miserable lies. How revelation pierces the maxims by which society excuses its follies and vices! A man whose soul is saturated by the profound and serious truths of his Bible walks through Vanity Fair with an altogether unenchanted eye. Revelation makes palpable the *horror* of sin. It compels the transformed devil to return to his true shape, and to confess himself utterly abominable. Critics complain that the fiends of Milton and Goethe are too noble, and that they elicit more or less of admiration and sympathy instead of creating in us unmitigated horror and hatred. But wickedness on the sacred page is ignoble enough—it has lost the splendour of its dress, the glitter of its gauds, the grandeur of its shape, the music of its voice, all the sorcery that bewitched the nations; it is mean, vulgar, dirty, ugly, loathsome, hateful, contemptible, brutal, devilish. Here we plainly see that the transformation of Satan into an angel of light means some counter-transformations far more real and lasting, in which

> "The express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
> Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear;
> Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat."

Revelation makes palpable the *fruits* of sin. Dragging forth into the light that which sin is most anxious to hide. Under Eden's tempting cluster it shows us Abel's corpse; David's licentiousness is linked with Absalom's rebellion and the rent kingdom; Gehazi's purple clothes make a background for his scaly face; Judas' pieces of silver purchase the field of blood; indeed, throughout, revelation boldly and faithfully declares, what it dramatizes on its last pages in the wreck of the splendid Babylon, that all the gaiety and glory of sin must be swallowed up in shame, plague, and torment.

Once our Master encountered Satan in his uttermost transfiguration, seeking to cheat the eye and soul with the vision of the kingdoms and the glory of them. With the words, "It is written," our tempted Lord pricked one gorgeous bubble after another; and we must follow His example. Here on the pages of prophets and apostles is the euphrasy to purge our vision. The lover of the Holy Book shall be delivered from the power of false ideals; he shall see light in God's light; he shall be kept from every false way.

4. Let us constantly *behold the vision of God.* It is only as we rise by contemplation, prayer, faith, to the vision of God and of that perfect universe of which He is the Centre, that the transfiguration of evil loses its power. In the presence of the Divine perfection all imperfection comes to light, all human imperfection; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight, and His angels He charges with folly. But if in the glory of the Throne the firstborn sons of light see all their brightest glories fade, how shall the fallen angels look there? "Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light" (R.V.). And a very middling angel he

makes of himself at best. When with utmost strain he has lifted himself above himself, he is but a rude phantom of the four-winged cherubim seen by Ezekiel, of the six-winged seraphim whom Isaiah heard crying the one to the other, of the angels of glory who irradiate the Apocalypse. Do what they may in profoundest guile, Moloch, Belial, Mammon, Lucifer, can never simulate the brightness and grace of Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel. There are always rude revealing rents in the cunningest disguises of evil; its currency, stamped with royal imagery, rings badly; a certain falsetto strain runs through its sweetest music; there is a seaminess in its robes of beauty and glory; its hand is never so white but the blood-stain and the flesh-spot are there; and although girt with golden wings, there is a betraying stoop in its greatness, an infallible sign of its fallen nature in its downcast eyes. He who dwells in the love, who constantly gazes on the face of God, will see through all false things, and be secure from the inveiglements of the powers of the air. And there is no safety but in this—in the familiarity of the soul with the patterns of things heavenly which God shows to His elect in the Mount.

And we are speaking of no abstract, mystical thing when we speak of the vision of God. We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Christ must we bring whatever thing or theory may solicit us. In His light we shall know exactly what is true in riches, liberty, greatness, honour, pleasure. Oh, how the false and rotten shrivel in His presence! What a penetrating glance He has! What a revealing touch! What a convicting word! The eye that looks on Him cannot be deceived. When philosophy would confuse you, the maxims of society

flatter you, the customs and fashions of the world beguile and betray you, go to Christ and try all things by His example, His Word, His Spirit. Take care that you discuss no question without Him; that you settle no question without Him. Put everything into His hand, as of old they put the penny, and abide by His judgment. Those who live in this high fellowship will forthwith find transfigured demons to be what they really are; they will put from them promptly and decisively the golden cup with its wine of fornication.

THE PLEA OF EVIL.

THE PLEA OF EVIL.

"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone."—MARK i. 23, 24.

MUCH that is strange is involved in the question of demoniacal possession, but we know so much about "the mystery of iniquity" that we need not be greatly astonished at this breaking forth of diabolism through the material world, which is indeed only a particular episode of an infinitely larger question; enough for us that this narrative sets forth in a vivid manner the supernaturalism of evil, and the power of Christ to grant sweet release from the awful tyranny.

I. We consider, first, *the plea of evil.* "Let us alone." This is the standing plea of evil; it demands that it shall not be meddled with, that no effort shall be made to restrict or dispossess it.

1. It is the plea of *personal* evil. We first hear this cry in the nursery. We are shocked by the sight of the demoniac boy brought by his father to the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, but the sight of young life torn and stained and tormented by awful tempers and passions is quite familiar to us all. The children of wrath claim, however, to be let alone. Rebuke their cruelty, injustice, selfishness, greediness, ingratitude, and their tiny treble protests against the unwarrantable interference. In maturer

life it is the same. How impatient and resentful young people often are when a faithful word is spoken to them! And older sinners feel themselves wronged and insulted when they are similarly admonished. In effect they say, Mind your own business, do not invade our prerogative, do not disturb our pleasure, do not harass us with your circumscriptions; let us alone. Many a faithful ministry has been repudiated because it bore hard on the inconsistent members of the congregation. The prophet has been stoned, the apostle beheaded, the martyr burned, nay, Christ Himself was crucified, because they reproved the sins of the people, because they would not let wickedness alone. The poor demoniac treated his Saviour as if He had been his tormentor, and in all generations those who are possessed by the spirit of evil resent criticism and interference; they demand toleration and immunity.

And this is the attitude of evil when we come to deal with it in our own heart; confronted by good, it boldly claims right and privilege. We might have supposed that in the presence of Jesus the demons would have been mute, that they would have shrunk from the awful Presence; but, on the contrary, we find their attitude assertive and defiant. "When the commandment came, sin revived;" in other words, in response to the action of the Law upon the Apostle's conscience, sin asserted itself; it awoke up like a wild beast disturbed in its lair; it lifted up its voice, put out its claws, showed its fangs, glared, snarled, foamed, hissed, and defiantly claimed to be let alone. The carnal mind asserts its right to be, and insolently rages when confronted with the claims of truth and love and righteousness—rages most of all when confronted with the beauty of Jesus Christ.

2. It is the plea of *public* evil. The moment reformers attempt to deal with any social wrong, any pernicious institution, or custom, or trade, or law, they are challenged after this fashion. It is so when idolatry is attacked. Not only do the heathen themselves rage and the people imagine a vain thing, but the clamorous pagan finds partisans in the very heart of our civilization. Influential men and eloquent writers do their utmost to discredit missionary enterprise; they contend that it is taking an unfair advantage, that it is an injustice, an impertinence on our part, to attempt to disturb the pagan in his ancestral faith and worship, no matter how dark and bloody his religious system may be. The same cry is repeated when slavery is attacked. It is alleged that slavery is an ancient institution, having a necessary place in the education of the race, and that it is mere fanaticism to preach about the higher law, and to attempt the abolition of a system which is such a precious instrument of discipline. It is the same when war is attacked. No sooner is the white flag of the peacemaker unfurled than the red spectre yells and shrieks, "Begone with your effeminate notions, your international arbitrations, your sentimentalisms and hypocrisies, and leave us alone in our glory." It is so when intemperance is attacked. It is scouted as an offence against liberty that any should attempt to criticize or restrain a dangerous trade. It is so when impurity is attacked. When we turn over a stone by the side of a ditch, there is a scattering of an ugly population who shoot out their stings; and when light is let into the infamous places of society, great and fierce is the outcry.

And when evil dare not claim absolute immunity, it pleads for toleration and delay. "And, behold, they cried

out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Satan is a great believer in the tardiest form of evolution, and greatly objects to the leaps and bounds which would limit or abolish his authority. How constantly do we witness this pleading for fine gradations in the elimination of evil! In the individual we often find this; evil habits are to be broken slowly for fear of the consequences of sudden change, and evil passions are to be cleansed slowly, with the deliberate belief that only thus can they be cleansed effectually. And constantly the community is exercised lest things of sin and shame should be removed prematurely. A false faith is not to be too vigorously condemned; it has its educational work to do, and must be left to do it. A bad institution must not be renounced sharply and thoroughly; it must be modified by degrees. The slave was to be liberated through "the apprenticeship system," and all evil that feels itself doomed argues for the adoption of this prudent, rational, statesmanlike, philosophical method. We are to touch the rottenness delicately, lest the pillared firmament should be rudely shaken; we must remove the stubble piecemeal, lest earth's base should fail. To attempt a sudden exorcism of evil is deprecated on the ground of sound and rational progress.

We speak sometimes of certain evils as "crying evils," that is, as crying for attention, redress, abolition; but attempt to deal with them, and you at once become aware that their loudest cry is to be let alone. Demons of uncleanness, blood, greed, injustice, inhumanity, fraud, are always abroad, clamouring, arguing, protesting, threatening, demanding to be left in possession of what they have possessed so fully and possessed so long. The last thing

to be expected from evil is that it will tamely abdicate. Let us be sure that it never quits its hold until after struggles which shake to their foundations personal, social, and national life.

II. At greater length we note *some characteristics of the plea of evil.*

1. The plea is *specious.* We cannot overlook the strange way in which the demon identifies himself with the man; or in which the lunatics identify themselves with the demons by whom they are possessed. The ordinary consciousness of the possessed was mixed up with their morbid consciousness. "Art Thou come to destroy us?" The demon has closely identified himself with the human, and it is cleverly represented that the devil is the man's friend, that Christ is the man's enemy, and whatsoever is done against the demon is done against the man. Sin has wonderfully interwoven itself with human interests, ambitions, pleasures, distinctions, with government, jurisprudence, literature, art, amusements, fashion, worship, and to strike against sin seems often an attack on the wealth, freedom, enjoyments, and aspirations of humanity itself. The demoniac regarded Christ as an enemy; and so to-day, when Christ comes to save men from their sins, they commonly regard His intervention as an attack on their interests, pleasures, liberty, progress. "Art Thou come to destroy us?" So blinded are the minds of them that believe not, that they regard an attack on the devil's kingdom as an invasion of their own rights, a confiscation of their own riches. Brethren, wickedness is never friendly to anything that concerns the rights, the safety, or the enrichment of humanity, and when the devil becomes our advocate it is the wolf pleading for the lamb. Christ is the great and

generous Friend of the individual and the race, and it is the profoundest falsehood to represent Him as the enemy of our independence, privilege, and pleasure. He never snaps a string, or blights a flower, or mars a picture, or quenches a light. This is the will of God, even our perfection, the fullest development and satisfaction of all our faculties, and this will of God concerning us is most fully declared in Jesus Christ. Let us not identify our privileges and delights with anything of injustice, or inhumanity, or falsehood, or impurity; everything that is great, precious, and glorious is given and conserved in the fear and faith of our Lord and Master. Christ came into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil, not that He might destroy in any sense or measure the glory and gladness of men. Christ will not destroy Art, by purifying it from indecency; or Recreation, by interdicting inebriety and gambling; or Romance, by purging it from the taint of the flesh; or Trade, by prohibiting the traffic that destroys the bodies and the souls of men; or Science, by enjoining reverence; or Fashion, by enforcing modesty and moderation; or Love, by driving out lust. No, only then shall these necessities, conveniences, embellishments of human life be fully realized, and the soul find in the midst of the abundance of the world the peace which passeth understanding.

2. This plea is *impudent.* At the first glance it seems modest, almost pathetic. "Let us alone." Can any one ask for less? Nevertheless the claim is impudent. When men ask to be let alone in any place, in any course, it is presumed that they have some right to be where they are, to do what they seek to do. Observe these two things—

First, this world is not the devil's world. If the assump-

tions of pessimism are correct, then this world is an altogether diabolic world—its law cruelty, its method illusion, its consciousness pain, its issue despair. Now, if this were so, evil would have a great deal to say for itself. Nay, if this were so, then virtue, truth, beauty, love, purity, joy, must be called upon to explain and apologize for themselves. What are they doing here? They are strange here as Orpheus with his lyre in hell, as Proserpine in the dark underworld with all her flowers, as Dante in the Inferno. These sweet and gracious things are utterly out of place in such a Satanic sphere. But this world is not the devil's world; in its primitive and essential constitution, in its ideal and design, in its normal working and course, its law is love, its method truth, its consciousness joy, its outlook hope; it is God's world, and goodness, holiness, beauty, felicity, have no need to apologize for their presence in it. The desert must apologize for itself, not the garden of spices; the black weed, not the lily or the rose; the cesspool, not the crystal river or the sea of glass.

Secondly, in the development of this world the devil plays no essential part. That evil is necessary, that it is the bitter leaven without which there can be no perfecting fermentation, we cannot grant. "Sin and Pain and Injustice are realities, and what is worse, they are necessities." "There is in Nature an infinite amount of abominable necessity and abominable possibility."[1] Good and evil are thus represented as being equally necessary in the evolution of the individual and the race. If this were so, once again, evil would have a great deal to say for itself. But such a representation is false. The Master acknowledged no sort of partnership with these spirits

[1] Vernon Lee.

of the night. They claimed no partnership with Him. "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?" They had nothing to do with Him; He had nothing to do with them. The disavowal of complicity was distinct and emphatic on both sides. Christ never recognized any necessity for evil in His own personal development. He who came to give the true pattern of character, the true theory of growth, knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Christ recognized no necessity for evil in the development of His glorious work. He did not tolerate the fiends as fellow-workers, but drove them forth as the absolute and unchangeable enemies of humanity. Christ taught us that wickedness has no necessary part in the world's evolution, only in its confusion, arrestment, and ruin. "There is in Nature an infinite amount of abominable necessity and abominable possibility." Of abominable possibility, yes; of abominable necessity, no. Wherever, then, may be the place for the devil and his angels, it is not here. Evil has no rights. Let us not dream that it has any local habitation here, any rational justification, any divine mission, that it belongs in some sense to the constitution of things, that it is indispensable in certain stages of personal and racial growth, that it is a horrible necessity to be philosophically endured. This is God's world, and the world of creatures made in His image and for His service. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

3. This plea is *cruel*. "Let us alone." Modest as it may seem, this appeal is infinitely terrible. The demon of our text in the first instance represents himself as the friend and advocate of the demoniac, but in the end it is

vividly seen that the tender mercies of the wicked one are cruel. "And when the unclean spirit had torn him, he came out of him." The possessed dwelt in the tombs, cut themselves with stones, cast themselves into the fire, fell down as dead. Under all its speciousness sin is awfully cruel, and to let it alone involves men and nations in the deepest guilt and misery. Can we let evil alone in ourselves—that which dims our eye, enervates our resolution, sears our conscience, destroys our affections, shatters our wing, blasts our hope? Oh, how the power of sin curses a man, pierces him through with mighty sorrows, flings him a derelict on the shores of eternity! That we do let sin alone in our heart is a sad fact and a deep mystery; that we ought not to rest with such a fatal malady eating out our strength and glory is patent enough. Can we for any consideration whatever let sin alone in our children? Sensitive as we are to their welfare, we cannot leave them a prey to the dark passions which destroy body and soul in hell. Can we let the heathen nations alone? Idolatry, infanticide, suttecism, hook-swinging, slavery, cannibalism, are sufficiently terrible customs to let alone, and yet they are but a few red bubbles on a vast sea of sorrow whose depths God alone can sound. Are we to let alone the evils which afflict our own community? Intemperance, lust, war, tyranny, and other vices are filling our land with woes too deep for tears. It may bespeak the philosophic mind to think serenely, and speak coolly, about these various evils, and to give fine reasons for leaving them undisturbed, but it bespeaks also a blind and foolish heart. Geologists can tranquilly estimate the ages it took for fierce fires to fuse the rocks, or for ponderous glaciers to grind them; but

when human hearts are filled with anguish and human faces stream with tears, it is no longer permissible that we stand by with serene wisdom and leave mighty ills to work on through untold ages. How awful indeed it would have been if Christ had acquiesced in the plea of the demons, and left the poor wretch in the grasp of hell! How awful to think of leaving men and nations in the power of hell to-day! However demons are tormented by going out of the world, we are tormented by their presence in it, and Christ has pity on us, not on them. Let us have pity on ourselves, and on one another.

III. We contemplate *Christ's rejection of the plea of evil.* "There was a man with an unclean spirit." How clearly Christ saw, and how plainly He characterized, the spirit with which He had to deal! A filthy fiend! he was just this in Christ's eye, and on Christ's tongue. Sin is transfigured in the world — it comes as Juno's bird with burnished train, as Venus' silver dove, as the butterfly-winged glory of Psyche; sin is transfigured in the temple— it cloaks itself with the priest's white, steals the chorister's music, affects the saint's nimbus; but on the pages of revelation it appears in its stark loathsomeness—there the doves, the peacocks, the butterflies, the angels of light, are frogs, locusts, dragons, serpents, scorpions, beasts. Christ always speaks of evil with severe revealing simplicity. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." The Master speaks of the demon with the same plainness. A filthy spirit! Here is the voice of truth. Sometimes the devil is spoken of by a

Greek name, sometimes by a Hebrew one, but here is the Saxon name so significant to the million. Before Christ's eye there is no illusion in evil, and there is none in it when He gives it a name. "Hell and destruction are before the Lord." In a world where the wit of man has been exercised for ages in dissembling the grossness of evil, how vast is our debt to the New Testament for showing evil to us as it is, base, ugly, dirty, abominable, deadly! "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace." Here is the voice of contempt. And such is always the tone of Christ in dealing with the spirits of evil. "Get thee hence, Satan." "Get thee behind Me, Satan." "And he suffered them not to speak." "Hold thy peace." So Christ speaks to principalities and powers as to a dog. Where a spark of reality, sincerity, promise, existed, Christ was infinitely patient and sympathetic; but there was no place for argument here, because in pure wickedness there is no truth, no reason, and no hope. Christ could enter into no parley; He could not accept anything from such a source; His work must have no seeming complicity with such agents and methods. "Come out of him." Here is the voice of authority. "And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him." "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

1. We learn *that evil is to be cast out of humanity.* Of late years quite a new view has been taken of the various

natural ills by which the race is plagued. Take, for example, the plagues fatal to vegetation. Until recently the husbandman regarded insect depredators as inevitable and irresistible. It seemed to him a mere matter of course that a large proportion of the fruits of the earth should be eaten up by grubs of all sorts, and seeds, plants, trees, were resigned to flies and beetles with the sense of abject helplessness. But science has changed all this. One of the most reassuring things of the day is the skill, the courage, the hope, with which agriculturists have entered into the struggle with their hereditary foes. "A Manual of Injurious Insects" is published every year, coloured drawings of the insects are given, their habits are described, their weak places pointed out, and in the spirit of victory the husbandman wages war upon the whole army of caterpillars, wireworms, beetles, maggots, earwigs, centipedes. And the same is true of the modern attitude toward the pestilences which have through generations filled our cities with mourning, lamentation, and woe. Our forefathers sat in despair before yellow fevers, black deaths, sweating-sicknesses, cholera, and similar pestilences, but science is now gradually feeling its way to the minute and obscure causes of epidemic diseases, and year by year we draw closer to the time when it may probably put into our hands the means not only of arresting these epidemics, but of stamping them out altogether. The physician has become familiar with the bacteria, and with ceaseless patience he tracks down the mischief to its origin and birth. With singular exultation the scientist anticipates the time when the whole range of zymotic disease will be conquered. Will any call this foolish dreaming, and argue that because these sad scourges have always been they always will be? Such a pessimist is

unworthy of the privilege of living in this glorious age. It is a delightful and legitimate hope that the race may yet master all its physical foes.

But if these physical evils are to be subdued, is not that moral evil, which is the root of all other evils, to be subdued also? Christ came to assure us of this, and the absolute casting out of the demon is the sign of the glorious truth. Evil may cry out with a loud voice; it may rage and threaten and tear; but it must go when we cast ourselves at the Redeemer's feet. Its expulsion from our own heart and life is assured there. And in the same almighty grace it shall be expelled from society. Jefferson Davis, flushed with the insolence of slavery, wrote to the North, "Let us alone, or——" But God filled up that line for them. Slavery perished, and their pride with it. "Let us alone, or——" is being continually shrieked on behalf of some foul thing or other; but one after another the demons are expelled. Let us not be afraid of evil when it cries with a loud voice, for crying with a loud voice it still comes out. The devil has often won with his loud voice; it is one of his favourite devices to create a panic; his threatenings are simply terrible; but impotence is under all the show, and, bravely confronted in the name of Christ, the vapourer comes out. He who does not lift up His voice in the street destroys the loud-voiced one by the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. The whisper of Christ prevails against all the wrath, and rage, and roar of hell.

2. We learn *that evil is to be wholly cast out.* The simple, radical, decisive manner in which Christ rejects the plea of evil is full of instruction. Christ did not restrain the infernal power, the evil spirits were to go out; judg-

ment was not deferred, they were to go out at once; the expulsion was total, they were all to go—not one left of all the legion, not a little one. There is not the most distant suspicion of compromise in Christ's treatment of evil. We must remember this in dealing with evil now. The temptation to compromise is always great; it wears a philosophic air; it seems so eminently reasonable and statesmanlike; it has the deliberation of science; it speaks in the tones of prudence, moderation, practicability. Yet is the short and sharp method of dealing with evil the method of Jesus Christ. Thus we must deal with evil in our own life. We are often strangely tender in our treatment of personal evil. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that it can be cleansed, cleansed thoroughly, cleansed now. We cannot believe that the whole seven are to go out, and that we are to be whole the selfsame hour. Oh, how imperfect is our conception of Christ's saving power! Let us rise to a worthy view. Let us reject the specious pleas of evil. Let us trust wholly, and now, in Him who came to destroy the works of the devil. In the Church also we must beware of the spirit of compromise. The Church has nothing to gain by making concessions to any real evil. Christ rejected the patronage of evil spirits; He would not permit them to testify to Him, although it would have seemed politic that He should have permitted such testimony. The Church has nothing to gain by parading the testimonies of infidelity to certain aspects of Christianity; nothing to gain by the cankered gold of lust and selfishness; nothing to gain by supporting the Bible with the barrel; nothing to gain by the patronage of worldly politicians. The Israelites spoiled the Egyptians, and those very jewels became a snare to the borrowers; spoiling the Egyptians is generally doubtful

cleverness. But such compromises are ever a gain to wickedness. War gains when the priest blesses its banners; slavery gains when the slave-owner is appointed a deacon; injustice and impurity gain when orthodox circles accept their tithes and patronage. It is an immense gain to the system of evil if at any point it can establish even a cobweb connection with the Christian Church. Here we must watch with the most scrupulous care. It is an awful thing for evil to insinuate itself into the Church, and to appeal to men with the authority of Jesus Christ. This is anti-Christ.

And in carrying righteousness into the life and laws and institutions of society, we must beware of the spirit of compromise. Much is said about "necessary evils," and it is insisted that in dealing with these evils we must proceed trimmingly. Let me give an illustration of this. Mr. W. S. Lilly, who protests against "the apotheosis of prostitution," which he regards as a distinctive note of our epoch, goes on to say, strangely enough, "And here let me guard myself against misconception. I know well that the poor in virtue, as the poor in worldly wealth, we have always with us. I know that in our present highly complex and artificial civilization, the rude proceedings, whereby the men of simpler ages sought to enforce chastity, would be out of date. I think it probable that in any age they did more harm than good. True, at all events in the existing condition of society, is St. Augustine's warning, 'Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaveris omnia libidinibus.' And, this being so, I believe the true function of the State is to control and regulate what it must regard as a necessary evil, and to minimize, as far as may be, the resultant mischiefs, moral and physical. These miserable

women are the guardians of our domestic purity."[1] To find a powerful and eloquent moralist like Mr. Lilly falling into such a sophism is simply lamentable. There could hardly be more false or ruinous teaching than this; such casuistry is utterly contrary to the spirit and method of the New Testament. We are not called upon gingerly to minimize evils after this fashion. The Church must tell the State that there are no necessary evils; it must demand the extirpation of every evil. How strange to stigmatize the courtesan as an "unclean creature," and then to tell us that she and her sisters "are the guardians of our domestic purity"! It would be equally true, or equally false, to say that forgers are the guardians of our commercial honour, or that drunkards are the guardians of the public health, or that slanderers are the guardians of our social integrity. Whatever society may claim from us, it can never claim that any of its members sin to serve it. In questions of mere expediency, compromise may be what Macaulay termed it, "the essence of politics;" but when righteousness is in question, compromise is "the devil's gospel." Christ utterly scouted that gospel in the text, so must we. We affect moderation, and do not wish to appear "extreme;" but how often have we seen that the *via media* is the privileged walk of the devil! Nothing is rational in dealing with evil but the severity that breaks it off suddenly, that condemns it utterly, that pursues it to the death.

3. We learn *that evil is cast out in Christ.* Christ set Himself against the demoniac power, and proved Himself its master. It is so to-day. The only power that grapples with and subdues the sensualities, the ferocities, the irrationalities of the race at this present hour is the power of

[1] "Right and Wrong."

the Lord Jesus. The devils are cast out in His name, and in none other. We have fine philosophies, and poetic systems innumerable, but it is only in Christ that the raging evil is rebuked and abolished. There are spirits of melancholy that the physician can cast out; imps of folly that the satirist can laugh hence; there are ugly shapes of mischief that the magistrate can control; but there is a malign and potent "sort" which yield only to Christ's sovereign grace. At this very hour, in a thousand places, Christ is driving out the infernal power, and bringing in the reign of reason, righteousness, and peace. The Christian evangelist in low neighbourhoods is dealing successfully with passion in its fiercest and most monstrous forms. The Christian missionary in dark lands full of cruelty is casting out frightful things. And tens of thousands of Christian people, in their crucial conflicts with the base elements of life, know that Christ's Spirit alone gave them the victory over the beast and his image. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." However men may explain it, the only force in the world that is really wrestling with and casting out the fierce, deep, chronic wickedness of the human heart is the truth and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Some sceptic recently expressed anxiety lest "the successive bankruptcies of liberalism" should lead society back once more to supernaturalism. Such a reaction is by no means unlikely; it is, indeed, natural and inevitable. What do the successive bankruptcies of liberalism mean? Simply this, that successive systems of scepticism have failed to

fulfil their promise; failed to satisfy our intellect, to assuage our griefs, to tame our passions, to cleanse society and to keep it pure. After successive bankruptcies of pretentious liberalism, in which the paltriest dividends have been realized to lessen our sins and sorrows, we must go back to Him who alone has discovered any real mastery of our heart. We have no choice but to go to Him who alone deals availingly with the stupidity, the madness, the devilishness, which lie at the root of the world's misery and despair. Men who can only treat the toothache are of little consequence when the plague is raging; and the sceptical philosophers who propound their little systems touching manners and politics are of little count to us who are groaning in the power of blind, dark passions which we can neither gainsay nor resist. Nothing will satisfy the race, nothing meets its case, nothing captivates and persuades it, except the demon-expelling virtue. "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee." In dealing with the profound evils which afflict us, let us fix our eye on Christ. The worst demoniac felt at once the sweet and majestic presence of Christ, and to-day, whenever Christ stands in the midst, the worst natures are sensible of His awful beauty and gracious power. Christ is our Hope; the Hope of society; the Hope of the race. By the word of His truth, by the charm of His beauty, by the magic of His love, by the virtue of His cross, by the power of His resurrection, by the grace of His Holy Spirit, shall the prince of this world be cast out.

It is, then, the duty of Christ's Church unceasingly to agitate against evil. If it could have let evil alone it would have had fewer martyrs, but it cannot. It is most intrusive, intolerant, uncompromising. It will protest, accuse, threaten, condemn. Christianity is the most irritating and harassing of all religions. When it goes to Rome it will not do as Rome does. It keeps on rebuking kings, priests, and peoples. It will give the world no peace until it gives it the peace of God which passeth understanding.

THE EVOLUTION OF EVIL.

THE EVOLUTION OF EVIL.

"But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."—2 TIM. iii. 13.

EVOLUTION as applied to good is a very comfortable doctrine; it is delightful to think of things and creatures becoming ever more complete, effective, beautiful; the evolution may be slow, but it is a sincere satisfaction to feel that it proceeds at all. The belief that evolution of this nature is the law of the universe at large can only inspire consolation and hope. But the text reminds us of the existence of another kind of evolution; it tells of men going from bad to worse, of evil working itself out in forms ever more pronounced, with consequences ever more tragic. And modern science entirely sanctions this aspect of the question. Whilst our scientists are inclined to believe that on the whole the law of evolution is carrying the world onward to a higher perfection, they fully acknowledge the terrible action of degeneration, the large part that it plays in nature, the vast area over which it acts, and its awful consequences. Let us now consider, first, the law of evolution in regard to several aspects of evil; and, secondly, the principle on which this evolution depends.

I. *The evolution of evil.*

1. The evolution of evil in relation to *faith.* The

development of error is the matter immediately before the Apostle in this place: he is speaking of those who go from one heresy to another. Men begin by questioning the great articles of their creed; they commence the process in no specially offensive temper, they seem only to obey the necessity and follow the methods of an independent mind. Gradually, like as when a moth fretteth a garment, the criticism becomes more antagonistic and destructive, until ere long the critic finds himself renouncing all the great inspiring articles of his faith: what began in an apparently laudable inquiry into the truth of religion ends in universal scepticism. We have an illustration of this evolution of error in the primitive Christian Church. In a very few years a variety of serious heresies infected the Church of God. Fever microbes are sometimes found in drops of dew; and no sooner had the pure doctrine of Christ and of His Apostles distilled like the morning dew, than it was polluted and poisoned with infusions of falsehood and superstition. The Church had only just received its deposit of truth, the Apostles were yet alive, and already the fine gold was dimmed, the wine mixed with water. And the Apostles foresaw that this process of degeneration would go on indefinitely. The sun of the Church went down whilst it was yet day, and ages of deep and deepening darkness followed—error, superstition, idolatry, licence, in their worst forms, became the characteristics of ecclesiastical life and history. In modern times we have a striking illustration of this degeneration of faith in the German nation. Germany was the birthplace of the Reformation—that is, the great German people emancipated itself from the superstitions which had so long darkened and destroyed the Church of Christ; they attained to a noble faith and a

living worship. But in the course of a century or so of decline they have been led by almost imperceptible steps into the depths of scepticism. For a long time, as Edgar Quinet points out, poetry held the place of religion, then mysticism; then philosophy became a religion, then patriotism became the national creed, then art became the substitute for worship, until in the end the old scriptural faith was no longer the faith of the nation. Germany made the great descent from Luther to Goethe, from Goethe to Heine, in its last stage jeering at all it once believed and loved; it has been able, without a single shock, to lull its past into forgetfulness, and to bury it without a sigh.[1]

And as we see this degeneration in a Church, and in a nation, we may see it also in the individual. Renan furnishes a striking illustration of such declension in the personal life. The scholar whose scepticism found its first general expression in his "Life of Christ," ends by writing a naturalistic drama, entitled "L'Abbesse de Jouarre," which has been condemned by his not over-squeamish countrymen as a glorification of sensual passion, a trampling underfoot of all the sovereign laws of virtue. It is not too much to say that the whole civilized world was astonished and shocked at such dramatic sensuality from such a source. "He pitched his tent toward Sodom." So have we all seen men renounce one great truth after another until nothing has been left them but a death's-head, and they have bitterly mocked at life, love, and virtue. It is rather popular just now to regard the loss of religious faith as a light thing, but the truly great men who speak to us from the sacred pages did not reckon thus. And surely it is no light thing; it is a disaster. The ship that drifts in

[1] "Early Life and Writings."

the dark night before the howling storm, having lost chart, compass, anchor, is in a bad way; and so is he who has lost all faith in higher things, who is driven helplessly by wind and wave, knowing no pathway and aiming at no haven. And at this moment there are thousands thus derelict. They set forth on the voyage of life with a religious faith, that is, with high ideals, principles, and inspirations; but having made shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience, all is lost.

Are we, then, to be afraid of testing our belief, afraid of a life of intelligence, knowledge, reflection? Lest our investigations should some day lead us to absolute atheism, are we to accept our Bible from our parents, our creed from the Church, asking no more questions? We ought to turn with scorn from any such ignoble intellectual surrender. And nothing is further from the thought of the Apostle than such a surrender of the independence of the soul. The point of his admonition is, we must take care in what spirit we begin and prosecute our criticism. "Deceiving and being deceived." The process of degeneration begins in a certain insincerity, and in insincerity is it developed. Evil does not arise out of good, but out of evil. Out of pure sincere reasoning comes no blinding destroying error; there is no evolution of evil where there is no germ of evil. We may readily see in the chapters of this Epistle where the initial cell of atheism may come in, where the first dangerous germ of unbelief may find insinuation. It may be found in a lack of seriousness. "Ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They were not moved to study by the love of truth, but by a desire for entertainment, by a longing for mere intellectual pastime. It may be found in a lack of humility. A

temper of vanity, pride, self-confidence, often leads men into error. It may be found in a lack of submission. The Apostle makes it very clear that it was their unwillingness to obey the truth that made these heretics unable to receive it. It may lie in a cowardice which prevents men acknowledging the truth and suffering for it. "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed." These heretics lacked the heroism to suffer for the truth's sake. From the whole Epistle we learn that the unbelievers could not attain to the truth because the necessary conditions did not exist in their inner life, and so the germs of error in their hearts were constantly springing up in monstrous shapes. The Apostle calls these heretics, sorcerers, impostors, magicians—they were mere theorists, pretenders, sophists, chatterers; there was nothing about them sober and true. There was nothing practical, experimental, fruitful, in their treatment of sacred things; all was vain, unreal, and deceptive as legerdemain. Here, then, it is that we have to watch. Whilst we pray for knowledge, and seek it with a true heart, we have nothing to fear; but the mustard seed of levity, insincerity, pride, cowardice, self-will, may germinate into fatal unbeliefs. We begin by "muttering perverseness;" we end by denying the God who made us, the Lord who bought us, the heaven that waits us. Ungodly wisdom is characterized by three adjectives which form a climax—earthly, sensual, devilish. It was really devilish in its beginning, but it was only as it developed itself that its true character was revealed.

2. The evolution of evil in relation to *character*. Evil possesses wonderful capabilities of expansion, multiplication, transformation, transmigration, exaggeration. Notice

specially three points in its susceptibility to development and increase.

(1) *One evil contains within itself the possibilities of all evil.* Medical writers have now much to tell touching the convertibility of disease. They have come to the conclusion that the constitutional defect appearing in a family in one generation is not necessarily transmitted in that exact form to succeeding generations. What appears at one time as insanity will reveal itself at another as epilepsy or paralysis; convulsions will reassert themselves as hysteria or insanity; insanity is converted into a tendency to suicide; the suicidal tendency will become a mania for drinking; what is neuralgia in the father may be melancholia in the son; what is deformity in one generation may be apoplexy in the next. In an afflicted family the constitutional defect has curious ramifications, and undergoes strange metamorphoses. It is much the same with evil. Men will indulge in one vice, whilst they express the utmost abhorrence of other vices of which they could never think themselves susceptible. But this is a mistake. All evils are one in root and essence; and surrendering ourselves to one form of iniquity, we surrender ourselves to all; changing circumstances and temptations will involve the law-breaker in other sins, and in aggravated guilt. Lying passes into thieving, thieving into drunkenness, drunkenness into lust, lust into hate, hate into murder—the vices are identical in principle; they are interchangeable and convertible, and he who is guilty in one point may find himself not only potentially but actually guilty of all. Granted a constitutional bodily defect, and it means deformity, insanity, dipsomania, epilepsy, paralysis, apoplexy, all these in turn as the hereditary law and subtle circumstances may determine;

so, granted a moral defect, a lack of faith, integrity, love, purity, we are liable to the whole catalogue of sins alike of the flesh and of the mind. In the Old Testament we find transgressors "adding sin to sin;" and St. Paul recognizes the same interrelation and sequence of the vices when he writes to the Romans, "as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity." One vice is related to another, changes into another, and he who begins with the transgression of one commandment finds it easy, sometimes finds it inevitable, to fall into manifold condemnation.

(2) *The mildest form of evil contains within itself the possibility of the most extreme evil.* When the father of William the Conqueror was departing for the Holy Land, he called together the peers of Normandy, and required them to swear allegiance to his young son, who was a mere infant; when the barons smiled at the feeble babe, the king promptly replied, "He is little, but he will grow." He did grow, and that baby-hand ere long ruled the nations as with a rod of iron. The same may be said of evil in its slenderest beginning, in its most innocuous form: "It is little, but it will grow." But who may say into what it will grow? "Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death." In its beginning it is a fancy, a flash of thought, a look, a word, a touch, a gesture, a tone, an accent, an embryo that no microscope could detect; but at last it is a Cain, a Judas, a Nero. The acorn-cup yields the upas tree; out of a spark flashes hell. The terrible crimes and miseries of the East End of London have recently been brought into great prominence, and one of the most distressing features of this subject is that considerable numbers of these appallingly

miserable characters were once respectable and happy. They were the children of honourable parents, they were trained in schools and sanctuaries, they were members of rich and influential circles; then they chose the downgrade; they were first guilty of unbecomingness, then of acts of graver misconduct, at length their friends lost sight of them, they lost sight of their friends; then ever lower lodging-houses, lower ginshops, lower pawnshops, until at last those who had been tenderly nursed, educated in universities, clothed in scarlet, were submerged in filth, crime, misery, simply unutterable. All this dire catastrophe once seemed impossible to them, as now it seems impossible to us; but forget not that the doubtful ever passes into the bad, the bad into the worse, the worse into the unspeakable.

(3) *The development of evil is peculiarly rapid.* One of the most startling features of the law of degeneration is the rapidity of its action. Highly organized creatures, whose perfection is the result of untold periods of evolution, will degenerate in a very brief period into a mere sac; slowly indeed do creatures attain complexity, strength, intelligence, splendour, but with changed circumstances they rapidly become miserable parasites, retaining no vestige of their old glory. But it has been justly said "no known animal possesses such a capacity for degradation as man." While unnumbered centuries are required by evolution for the selective development of an Englishman from a troglodyte, five or ten years of hard drinking are quite enough to degrade an intellectual Hercules into the condition, mental and physical, of a digger Indian.[1] The moral degeneration of men is still more awfully precipitate. With much patience

[1] Thornton, "Opposites."

and painstaking do we master our faults; slowly, through continuous aspiration, prayer, and sacrifice, do we fulfil our ideals; but with alarming facility we "throw back" to baser life, with shocking speed do we drop from heights of purity and vision into depths of infamy. It is true that sin does not produce devils in us all at once, any more than that grace begets angels in us all at once—there is an infancy in evil as well as in good; but, whatever may be the reason, evil grows faster than good; it has a short infancy. As Amiel says, "The germs of all things are in every heart, and the greatest criminals as well as the greatest heroes are but different modes of ourselves. Only evil grows of itself, while for goodness we want effort and courage." Yes, evil grows of itself, grows vigorously. With infinite care we rear the rare roses, but how spontaneously and luxuriantly spring the weeds! By costly culture we ripen the golden sheaf, but how the noxious poppies bloom! Very tenderly must we nourish things of beauty, but how the vermin breed and swarm! And so, whilst the germs of good in our heart come to fruition only after long years of vigilance and devotion, the tares are ever springing up in a night, dashing the beauty with their blackness, and bearing the hundredfold of bitterness and blasting.

3. The evolution of evil in relation to *destiny*. Men in this life often go a long way in the development of evil; they become dead to truth, to decency, to hope. But we have no reason to suppose that this degeneration ends here. Revelation fixes no limit to the evolution of good. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Delightful doctrine! It has not entered into the human heart to conceive its own possibilities of glory and joy. But at the same time revelation fixes no

limit to the evolution of evil. It propounds the awful doctrine of a "bottomless pit," which, in the language of our day, signifies unarrested, limitless degradation. As the pure ever ascend to rarer heights of power, vision, and felicity, the impure ever sink in deeper depths of iniquity, woe, and blasphemy. And is not this doctrine of future degeneration in keeping with the law of degeneration as we know it here and now? It has been asserted that "the doctrine of evolution, so far as it is accepted, changes the whole relations of man to the creative power; it substitutes infinite hope in the place of infinite despair." But is this exactly so? Does the theory of evolution justify this optimism? We think not. Speaking of the organisms brought to light by the Atlantic dredging expedition, Dr. Carpenter says, "This little organism is clearly a dwarfed and deformed representative of the highly developed *Apiocrinus* of the Bradford clay; which, as my friend Wyville Thomson said, seems to have been going to the bad for millions of years."[1] Thus we learn that a lowly creature living on the ocean floor is capable of going to the bad for millions of years; through vast ages it has ever become more dwarfed, deformed, degraded. But if such a vast course of degradation is possible in a sea-worm, what are the possibilities of degradation in a soul? If the simple, comparatively insignificant creature of the slime is capable of a debasement extending over long ages, who may fix the limit to the possible deterioration of a being so complex, profound, and inexhaustible as man? If the lowest creature has such a capacity for degeneration, how many ages will it demand to bring the highest creature to the point of elimination and extinction? Science has found a bottom-

[1] "Nature and Man."

less pit so far as anything material can be bottomless, and really science has nothing to say against a spiritual being waxing worse and worse through indefinite ages. What is so clearly evidenced in the semi-immortality of a species, may easily be true in the individual immortal soul.

It may be objected that there is a limit to the action and perpetuation of the abnormal—that nature either purifies a race of its physical and moral defects, or, if the type be too vicious, exterminates it; but in a spiritual universe wickedness may work itself out with a fulness of consequence which is impossible in this terrestrial life. The physical universe supplies the analogy of interminable degradation, and it could not be expected to give any further demonstration. Our Lord makes no formal attempt to teach us the secrets of the prison-house, but accidentally, as it were, He gives us awful glimpses into the degradation of the abyss. The "unclean spirit" that goes out of a man is bad enough in all conscience, and yet he can find "other spirits more wicked than himself." Out of the lowest deep there opens a lower; one bad hierarchy sinking below another. We consider—

II. *The principle on which the evolution of evil proceeds.* "Deceiving and being deceived." The principle on which the evolution of evil proceeds is the action of the social law. It is by a system of reciprocal action that the irrational creatures are stimulated and developed; pitted one against another, the various orders of beasts and birds attain and maintain their best. By association, mutuality, rivalry, the animal race realizes a perfection of form and force that would be utterly impossible to it in a state of isolation. And the normal action of the social law is to secure the highest perfection of humanity. We are associated into

tribes, families, nations, that the individual may be educated and completed in his intellectual, affectional, and moral life. Only by this system of relations and reactions can the great possibilities of our nature be accomplished; men can only do their best, put forth their strongest, live out their noblest, as they mingle together, combine, co-operate. Solitude has its place in the education of the human life, but the influence of isolation may soon become enfeebling and destructive. The action of the social law is to enrich each individual member of the community; it means help, enrichment, defence, all round. And that hope for the future which is the mainspring of civilization is based on the social law which, duly kept, tends constantly to produce a higher order of men and women. The expectation of a golden age rests on that profound complex law which God has inwrought into the very soul of the race, holding it together, securing its safety, provoking it to unwonted excellence, transmitting its treasures, strengthening it to splendid achievements altogether beyond the dreams of isolated personal life. Here, then, is the principal and benign design of that social law so firmly established by God in the very constitution of things—its working and discipline are to eliminate the diseased, the imbecile, the unworthy, the unhappy, and to fill the world with the best of everything at its best.

But man's lower nature can act through the social spirit as well as his higher; it is possible to pervert and prostitute the social law in such a way that it produces the direst consequences. Men may be made worse as well as better by association. That which was ordained unto life through sin works ruin and death. Faithfully obey the social law, and it secures the highest perfection of the individual; pervert it,

and it inflicts the deepest degradation. Death is worked by that which is good; man's intellectual powers are corrupted, his heart withered, his life debased, in an extraordinary degree. Through the fellowship of sinners the vices get their most desperate hold, and their most terrible developments. The law that was designed to secure the soundest health, the rarest beauty, the most delicate fitness, the fullest joy, produces disease, horror, ugliness, unfitness, misery, in their most intense and exaggerated forms. The perversion of the social law is as when Alpine climbers stumble, and the ropes which were intended to strengthen them to reach glorious heights drag down the whole party into the frightful abyss. The corruption of the best is ever the worst, and the corruption of that noblest law which contemplates our highest perfection and felicity can only mean proportionate disaster and misery.

Do we not see abundant illustrations of the sad consequences of the perversion of social law? Criminals are said to display quite a fiendish pleasure in corrupting one another; they will not permit in a fellow-prisoner any slender vestige of a virtue, but unceasingly drag one another down to deeper depths of foulness and blasphemy. And evil men on every side through the social law wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. They dare one another, provoke, tempt, decoy, blind, coerce, punish one another. They defraud, corrupt, afflict one another with perverse ingenuity and base enthusiasm. Often they do all this consciously and designedly, and when they do not act with deliberate purpose their evil communications are not less corrupting. So far from the troubled sea working itself pure, deep calleth unto deep, the mire and dirt are more offensive, and the raging waves

foam out an intenser shame. Here, then, we perceive the law that will bring to pass all the terrible judgments that revelation pronounces against transgressors. We need not to perplex ourselves about strange material tortures, and mysterious methods of retribution; in the perversion of that social law with which we are so familiar, we find the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. The law of mutuality that has worked out for us so many glorious things, and on whose benign action we now rest such glorious hopes, will become an instrument of immeasurable degradation and woe in the sphere of false and foul and passionate life. We see already the mighty corrupting force of perverted reciprocity, but what shall be the tragical condition of things when the restrictions and ameliorations of the present are removed, and when the law of retribution, left to its full action, shall fill guilty souls with the fruits of their own ways! "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Well might Dives dread the coming of his five brethren, for in the social law is the secret of the fulness of woe and of the pains which are for evermore.

Let us conclude with one or two lessons suggested by our theme.

1. Let us *avoid the beginnings of evil.* Here we are called specially to watch. Says a writer who cannot be suspected of any theological sympathies, "The steps by which the occasional criminal develops into the habitual criminal are slow and subtle; this is one of the tragedies of life. . . . The circles of crime extend from heaven to very murky depths of hell, and yet they are not far from

any one of us."[1] Very true words are these touching a great tragedy of life. Let us beware of the first step from innocency, safety, heaven. A while ago the omnibus on its way from Gray's Inn Road to Islington had to traverse a narrow and dangerous piece of roadway—a sharp, slippery declivity, called "The Devil's Slide." How terrible, indeed, is the devil's slide! How tempting it is! —a short cut, a very short cut, to fame, wealth, power, pleasure. How graduated and smooth it is! What a specious name it often has! Strangely enough, that declivity in London was called "Mount Pleasant;" and the downward roads of life often are known by charming names. But enter on that slide, and you soon attain a startling velocity, sooner or later you arrive at an ignominious doom. Let no man think himself safe. The circles of crime dipping to very murky depths of hell are not far from any one of us. Let every man be careful at the cross-roads of life lest he take the wrong turning. Let every man remember that he is to pray not only for strength against temptation, but that he be not led into temptation; he is to watch that he enter not into temptation.

2. Let us *cultivate purity of heart.* In the thoughts which are "far off" is the ultimate danger. There is no evolution where there is no germ. Before peeping and muttering against the faith there is a thought of unbelief. Before the first faint denial of godliness there is a thought of worldliness. Before the act of sin is the thought of sin. It is from these soul-seeds that the dire acts and consequences of sin outflower. Here we see again how truly philosophical is the faith of Jesus Christ. Our Lord is not

[1] Havelock Ellis, "The Criminal."

content to cut off sin above ground; He must destroy the root as well as the branch. Just as the scientist nowadays feels that disease must be attacked in the germ, so the faith of Christ attacks sin in its very origin. Purity of heart is the burden of the New Testament. Let us seek for perfect sincerity of heart; that we have no aim or desire in life that supersedes or disturbs our purpose of living to the glory of God. Let us seek for a heart full of noble thoughts and sympathies, in which no room is left for selfish and sensual imaginations. Let us seek that our heart shall be strong in love and goodness; that we do not allow those conditions of coldness and weakness in which moral diseases, as well as natural ones, take their origin. Let us seek that our heart be full of holy gladness; that we have no affinity for the pursuits and pleasures of baser life. Here is the solemn duty of life, to seek out and destroy the germs of evil wherever these may be found. We must in no lazy, or unbelieving, or superstitious spirit permit any evil to abide in society that we might utterly destroy, for from that evil may spring an epidemic of crimes, the decadence of a nation; and when we have interdicted every vice by law and opinion, we must still carry righteousness back into the public conscience, we must establish goodness in the heart of the people, or every evil that makes us mourn will spring again into power. And in our personal life we must be equally radical. Oh, what would not the patient give to have the last fibre of the dreadful cancer removed, for whilst that fibre is there every possibility of the malady is there! So let us pray that God by His almighty grace may cleanse the very thoughts of our heart, so shall we be innocent from the great transgression. Air, sunshine, fragrance, are

all said to be fatal to destroying germs; let us saturate our soul day by day in the atmosphere and light and sweetness of the upper worlds, so shall all evil things die in us, and all good things live and grow in us.

3. Let us *loyally keep the social law*. We have seen how the social law when perverted acts most fatally, making monsters of men; but that law duly observed will prove an instrument of blessing, and we cannot attain perfection without it. In a life of virtue we must not attempt to stand alone. We must have fellowship with the saints. In the world we see men waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; in the Church we witness the gracious spectacle of men waxing better and better, uplifting and being uplifted. Here, in mutual conversation and worship and service, sincere souls find themselves unspeakably enriched and strengthened. No one intent on serving God can afford to dispense with the communion of saints, the discipline and stimulations of the Christian Church. And then we must loyally hold by the social law in the whole sphere of life. Instructing others, we shall find ourselves illuminated; rescuing others, we shall ourselves be saved; watering others, we shall be watered; enriching others, our gifts shall return sevenfold into our own bosom. Many sincere souls are weak and poor because they do not understand the place and power of the social law in the development of Christian character. With a true heart bend yourself to God's service, live in the fellowship of His people and in the service of your generation according to His will, and whatever may be the witchery, the fecundity, the tyranny of sin, you shall overcome it. "Devil with devil damned firm concord holds," and through their concord become sevenfold more the children of hell than they

were before; the seraphim cry one to another, and as they cry they burn—burn into an ever purer and diviner flame. Let us with the seraphim seize the social law, and mutual love, devotion, and service will one day place us by their side.

THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL.

THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL.

"Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire."—JER. xxxvii. 9, 10.

JEREMIAH had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans came against the city, but hearing that the Egyptians were coming out against them, they forthwith raised the siege, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were ready to believe that the storm had blown over and that they were safe. The Chaldeans had hastily departed, and the dark predictions of Jeremiah seemed belied by the event. It is at this point that Jeremiah speaks in the text, "Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart." And so it came to pass. Pharaoh's army which came forth to help Israel returned to Egypt, and the Chaldeans coming again to Jerusalem invested the city and burned it with fire. The great teaching of the text is, then, that we must not allow appearances to mislead us respecting the fact and certainty of the law of retribution. God has threatened the transgressor with severe penalties, and we may be sure that

these penalties will be inflicted, however unlikely such retribution may sometimes seem, and however long it may be delayed. By wonderful ways God brings His judgments to pass.

I. *We mark some illustrations of the law of retribution furnished by the history of the nations.* The Old Testament records many instances of the fact that God makes the law of retribution to act by unlikely instruments, in unlikely ways, and at unlikely times. Very memorable was the retribution that Israel brought on Egypt. For four hundred years the Egyptian oppressed the Israelite, and at the end of that period nothing seemed more unlikely than that those groaning slaves could retaliate and do Egypt any hurt. On the one side was a mighty people, with palaces, temples, armies, with wealth, pride, and power; and on the other side was a handful of slaves, crushed and bleeding through the bitter bondage of four centuries. So far as human calculation went, Pharaoh might well despise them. But these helpless slaves were God's "wounded men," and by them was the throne of Pharaoh overturned and the glory of Egypt darkened. At the other end of their national history, Israel itself furnishes a most striking illustration of the working of the law of retribution through all improbabilities. When the Christ was crucified through weakness, the people cried, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." How unlikely did it seem that the Victim of Calvary could ever be avenged upon an unjust nation! And yet that "wounded Man" rose up invested with strange powers, and burned their city with fire.

And let us not think that these instances of retribution are to be placed in the category of the miraculous; they were the natural consequences of great denials of truth

and justice. Men unjustly "pierced through" are terrible avengers in all ages and nations. For centuries did the kings and nobles of France oppress the peasantry; it is impossible for us to think adequately of the vast hopeless wretchedness of the people from the cradle to the grave. When Louis XVI. came to the throne it seemed incredible that the long-suffering people would ever avenge themselves upon the powerful classes by whom they were ground to the dust, and yet by a marvellous series of events the "wounded men" arose in awful wrath, burning palaces with fire and trampling greatness underfoot. "Pierced through" were those hungry hopeless millions; but the day of doom came, and every bleeding wretch arose invincible with torch and sword. For generations the African was wronged by the American; the negro had no military, political, or literary power; he was bought and sold as are the dumb driven cattle, and it seemed as if the fetters of a shameful degradation were riveted upon him for ever. "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" As late as 1854 Wendell Phillips wrote despairingly, "Indeed, the Government has fallen into the hands of the slave power completely. So far as national politics are concerned, we are beaten—there's no hope. . . . The future seems to unfold a vast slave empire united with Brazil, and darkening the whole West. I hope I may be a false prophet, but the sky was never so dark." And yet immediately after this the "wounded men" arose, deluging the land with blood and burning the cities of the great Republic with fire. Have we not another illustration in the wonderful way in which God finally delivered Italy from the deadly ecclesiastical misgovernment of ages? The Pope of Rome and the King of France together declared

that the Italian people should never acquire Rome, and with it the sovereignty of Italy. Garibaldi was lying terribly wounded; there seemed no hope; yet once more the "wounded man" prevailed—France was burned with fire, Italy was free. And God rules among the nations to-day as certainly as He ruled the nations of old; and just as certainly will He bring us into judgment if we are guilty of atheism, injustice, unrighteousness. If we keep back the hire of the labourer who has reaped our fields, or if our labourers fail to fulfil their share of the covenant and are guilty of extortion, indolence, and excess; if we starve or wrong those who weave our purple and create our luxuries; if we get gain by adulterations which defraud and poison; if, for the sake of any base gratification or mercenary end, we take advantage of those who are inferior to ourselves in knowledge and station; if we employ our political and military ascendency to wrong any subject tribe or nation; God will surely visit us, humble us, destroy us.

Brethren, let us again believe in the reign of eternal justice. Such was the faith of the glorious prophets of Israel; they believed in the just God, and taught with profound and unflinching courage that no nation can violate the law of righteousness with impunity, and history gives its sanction to the sublime teaching. Retribution may not come in the form of a loss of territory, but it will come. Some of our writers argue that retribution does not follow on national wrong-doing, because territory gained by cruelty, treachery, bloodshed, is not as a matter of fact torn away from its guilty conquerors, but such ill-acquired territory remains a permanent portion of their splendid empire. But there are other ways of inflicting retribution upon a nation than by immediately depriving it of provinces.

There is something very like irony in the government of God, and He sometimes punishes the victors through the spoil. Our Indian Empire is said to have been ill-gotten, and yet we retain it, that country being to Britain what the tail is to the peacock—our glory and pride. But the gilded train, it will be remembered, has been already splashed with blood, and the end is not yet. Retribution may not come in the form of specially inflicted judgments, but it will come. No pestilence, war, earthquake, or famine marks the Divine displeasure, but the retribution arises out of the iniquity. With great injustice and cruelty the French drove out the Huguenots, but in expelling these sons of faith, genius, industry, virtue, the French fatally impoverished their national life, and they are suffering to-day from these missing elements which none may restore. Retribution may not be revealed in material disaster, but it will come. "And he gave them their request: but sent leanness into their soul." It is possible for a people to increase in material wealth and political consideration whilst its true grandeur, its greatness of soul, is gradually passing away. Very strange and subtle are the causes of the decay of nations, and little by little, quite unconsciously, does a people lose the great qualities which made it. Poets lose their fire, artists their imagination, merchants their enterprise, statesmen their sagacity, soldiers their heroism, the people their self-control; literature becomes commonplaces, art lifeless, great men dwindle into mediocrities, good men perish from the land, and the glory of a nation departs, leaving only a shell, a shadow, a memory. Retribution may not come suddenly, but it will come. "Alas! alas! that great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious

stones, and pearls. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought." The destruction of Babylon is not always thus sudden, but it is sure. As Mommsen, one of the greatest of historians, declares, "History has a Nemesis for every sin!"

It may seem that all might and majesty are with an unjust nation, and that "wounded men" only are on the other side; but at God's call wounded men are Michaels wielding flaming swords. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." Sometimes we are greatly amazed and perplexed at the way in which history unfolds itself—it would seem as if the diplomacy of evil were too much for the Ruler of the world, as if Providence made hesitating moves, weak moves, fatal moves; but we have only to wait awhile to know that God's foolishness is wiser than men. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" "The Lord shall have them in derision." "The weakness of God is stronger than men." The sun is sometimes weak, but its earliest ray in the dawn is more than all our electric lights, the first faint beam of the spring is infinitely more than all the sparks of our kindling; the sea is sometimes weak—it is a mill-pond, we say—but in its softest ripple is a suggestion of power that fills us with awe; the wind is sometimes weak, but in the gentlest zephyr is hinted the majesty of infinite strength. Nature shows how the weakness of God is immeasurably stronger than men; so does history with equal clearness. The oft-quoted saying, "Providence is always on the side of the big battalions," is one with an imposing sound, but it is disproved by history over and over again. Some of the decisive battles of the world were won by the small battalions. More than once has the sling and the stone prevailed against the Philistine army. Battles

are won by the big brain; and wherever that may be, slight weapons and resources are sufficient for splendid victories. Now the all-wise God sits on the throne of the world, and we are often filled with astonishment at the insignificant agents with which Heaven smites its foes, and causes victory to settle on the banners of right and justice. The world's Ruler defeated Pharaoh with frogs and flies; He humbled Israel with the grasshopper; He smeared the splendour of Herod with worms; on the plains of Russia, He broke the power of Napoleon with a snowflake. God has no need to despatch an archangel; when once He is angry, a microbe will do.

"The heavens make no sound,
Their laughter's in events."

II. *We note the law of retribution as exemplified in the individual life.* The great law works infallibly in the personal history as it does in the national life. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds. . . . Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." It was very difficult for men of that age to realize their individuality; but the Apostle declares to them that they stand out personally quite distinct from Church or State, and that each of them will be dealt with in equal justice. And in these days of cosmic philosophies and large social conceptions, we must not forget that the individual has not parted with an iota of responsibility. What is true of the mass is first true of the atom; what is true of the ocean is first true of the drop. It is easy to see the law of retribution when it is exemplified in the broad effects of national calamity, but not so easy to

apprehend its action in the individual fortune. We stand in awe over the shattered greatness and buried splendour of Egypt, Babylon, Judæa, Phœnicia, Greece; but the ruin that sin works in the individual destiny is just as certain, and infinitely more awful. If we could once see a soul in ruins, we should never speak again of Nineveh, Memphis, Jerusalem, Tyre, Athens. "Deceive not yourselves." God has wonderful ways of confounding us, and we may be sure that our sins will find us out.

1. Let us not permit ourselves to be deceived *by flattering prophets*. There were prophets who spoke comfortably to Zedekiah, assuring him of his own safety and of the safety of the city, and these prophets were popular whilst Jeremiah was cast into prison; nevertheless, the dark things predicted by Jeremiah came to pass. In the present time there is no lack of soft-tongued prophets. Loudly does revelation declare the obligation of righteousness, and grievous are the judgments that it pronounces against transgressors, but all this in our age has been accepted in quite a modified sense. Men will now hardly allow such a word as "wrath!" they will not permit a man to suffer simply as a punishment for his sin; the violation of laws human and divine must be condoned and passed over with the least reprobation and vengeance. Let us rejoice in the growth of the sentiment of humanity, but we must shut our ears to the effeminate and sentimental teaching which will inevitably relax and destroy a noble morality. The greatness of Rome was built, says the historian, on a "law of inexorable severity;" and the greatness of the universe is built on such a law—a law that will be eternally enforced. Look at the severe laws which constantly are in action to keep the physical universe pure! Whatever is decaying, languishing, stag-

nant, is injurious, and must be cleared away. Terrible forces stand ready to annihilate rottenness. In the river is the crocodile; in the ocean creeping things with insatiable appetites; in the heavens the vulture, eager and cruel; in the air insects full of blind wrath, created to devour as the fire is to consume; on every side are these anatomists, dissectors, destroyers, without sobriety, moderation, or pity, devouring whatsoever is unclean, and keeping the world pure as with a consuming flame. And are there not in the world of spirits stern laws ever working to maintain its purity? Are there not unpitying messengers casting out of the higher kingdom whatsoever does offend? Are there not living executioners eliminating and destroying the morally unclean, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie? Let us be sure that as death and filth are seized upon in the physical universe and cleansed away forthwith, nothing that is defiled, nothing that defileth, shall escape in that moral universe, in the centre of which sits One the eyes of whose glory cannot look upon iniquity. Listen not to flattering words. God is merciful, but fire does not forget to burn, teeth to tear, water to drown, and no transgression of the Law can pass without detection and punishment. "And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay." God's complex system of retribution permits not the cleverest sinner to slip through.

2. Let us not deceive ourselves *because appearances seem to promise immunity.* The lad who determines to rob his employers acquaints himself with the business methods of the house in which he is engaged—the store-keeping, the book-keeping, the system of checks; and at length, feeling perfectly sure of the situation, he proceeds so skilfully to work in his embezzlements that detection seems simply

impossible. But the acute youth forgets that society is a great deal older than he is, that it is a great deal cleverer, that through vast experience it has elaborated a delicate and comprehensive system of detection, and the young sinner is forthwith entangled in the meshes of the law. We sadly smile to think of the boy's infatuation, of his folly in matching himself against the ages. But think of the Divine system of retribution—how wide-reaching, exact, inevitable! Our severest supervision, our keenest espionage, our most adroit arrangements, our most vigilant police, our most exquisite and effective instruments, all are coarse and clumsy compared with the working of that delicate and inevitable law inwrought by God into the very constitution of the race, and into the very constitution of things. When Joseph's brethren had thrown their young brother into a pit and left him there, how utterly hopeless seemed the lad's condition! He was to all intents and purposes buried alive, and it seemed absolutely impossible that he should ever avenge himself upon the fratricides. But in due time the wounded man was on the throne of Egypt, and the strong-handed clever sinners were lamenting, "Verily we are guilty concerning our brother." And we may be sure that this was no singular instance of God's retributive government, but rather a dramatization of that vast eternal justice which works sleeplessly in the life and destiny of all men. Our modern knowledge of science, of the unity and interdependence of all things, of the continuity and persistence of force and motion, of the inviolable integrity of all organisms, ought to make it easy to us to believe that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap, however appearances may promise otherwise. Let us not be beguiled by the immediate aspects of life and circumstance. God's blind men watch us; His

lame men run us down; His deaf men filch our secrets; His dumb men impeach us; His wounded men arise, every man a messenger of revenge.

3. Let us not deceive ourselves *because judgment is delayed.* Scherer objects to Milton's conception of Satan: "How are we to comprehend an angel who enters on a conflict with God, that is to say, with a being whom he knows to be omnipotent? . . . The idea of Satan is a contradictory idea: for it is contradictory to know God and yet attempt rivalry with Him."[1] But the fact is, that what Milton pictures in Satan we see every day in men around us; we find it in ourselves. It appears strange, when we are suddenly called upon to contemplate it in poetic beings, that they should array themselves against Omnipotence, but it is what we ourselves are doing constantly; the difficulty of comprehending an angel who enters on a conflict with God can hardly be insurmountable to that humanity which perpetually wages a similar conflict with Him. It may to pure thought and logic be contradictory to know God and yet attempt rivalry with Him, but it is a sad fact to which there is abundant evidence outside pandemonium, and we are compelled to regard the contradictory idea as part of the mystery of iniquity. Men do enter into conflict with the laws of the world; they marshal their petty forces against the constellations; they set at defiance the profound arrangements of nature, society, and mind, and fancy that by some chance or other they will strew the firmament with ruin and plant their throne above the stars. As we say, it is the mystery of iniquity that creatures can be the victims of such a mighty illusion.

[1] "Essays on English Literature."

But the truth is, man has a vast power of self-deception, he has always at hand a variety of sophistries, and so he persuades himself that he may with advantage challenge Eternal Wisdom, Justice, and Power. And one of the causes of his sad blindness is found in his misinterpretation of those pauses which occur in the government of God. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Brethren, let us not thus misconstrue the order of events and the delay of justice. "Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans, . . . yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire." Final success in evil is impossible. In contending with God we are plotting against a Wisdom that seems sometimes to hesitate and fail; but never is that Wisdom more profound than in the moments of seeming perplexity, and if we yield to flattering hopes of victory, our final overthrow will only be the more complete and irreparable for these protractions of the conflict. In contending with God we are warring with a Power that ever and anon seems baffled and beaten; it seems to retreat, it allows us to win skirmishes here and there—only the more conspicuously to crush us in the decisive battle, if we persist to fight it out to the bitter end. In contending with God we are provoking a Justice which sometimes seems incapable of asserting itself; but inveterate perversity discovers in the event that all such hesitations and delays were the whettings of a sword which needs not to smite twice. Slowly it may be, but surely, do we ripen for judgment; and when once ripe, how little a thing is necessary to precipitate the

calamity! When our health has fallen away to a certain point, a breath of bad air will throw us into a fever, the prick of a pin poison our blood, a sudden emotion stop our heart for ever. So we ripen for judgment, and when the moment comes, which God only knows, the sinner, apparently triumphant, falls a ready victim to the wounded man. As the Hindoos say, "When men are ripe for slaughter, even straws turn into thunderbolts."

4. Let us improve *the gracious respite.* How different the issue would have been if Zedekiah and his people had listened to Jeremiah, and humbled themselves before God for their unrighteousness! We too, amid deserved judgments, are granted kind reprieves; let us heartily avail ourselves of them. Many rebel altogether against the doctrine of grace, sternly insisting on inexorable law, justice, retribution; they utterly reprobate the ideas of repentance, forgiveness, and salvation. But mercy is a fact as much as justice is. Within that great system of severities we call nature there are ameliorative arrangements softening the rigours of broken law; in human life and government, too, which is nature still, only on a higher plane, mercy and forgiveness assert themselves, and society greatly prizes the gracious quality; and it is therefore a mistake, judged by the light of nature, to make an antithesis of equity and grace, as if these qualities were mutually antagonistic and eternally irreconcilable—they both exist side by side in this tangible human world with which we are so familiar. Now, the grand burden of the Gospel is to bring into fullest light that doctrine of mercy hinted by nature, and to show us that grace is not arbitrariness, the negation of law, the neglect of justice, but that the fullest and most splendid revelation of grace

may take place on the basis of eternal truth and justice. Michelet calls the Epistle to the Romans "the Marseilles Hymn of the Gospel of Grace, the utter setting at nought of the Law."[1] But this is strangely to misunderstand the significance of that glorious Epistle. It was no part of Paul's purpose to set at nought the law, or to extol an arbitrary grace, but exultingly to show the compatibility of law and grace, and to point out how the death of Christ was the supreme illustration of both. "That He might be just, and the Justifier of the ungodly." The problem suggested by nature is solved in Christ crucified, and the sublime solution is declared at large in the Marseilles Hymn of the Gospel, the Epistle to the Romans; it is a song of revolt, of liberty, of glory; of revolt from the tyranny of lust, of liberty through the keeping of the law, of glory as it gives peace and immortality through righteousness.

The great reason why these thinkers are so bitterly opposed to the doctrine of grace is, that it is supposed to encourage men to sin by opening to them a door of escape. That men may turn the grace of God into lasciviousness has been acknowledged by Christianity from the beginning, but the denial of that grace would multiply sin infinitely. It is a mistake to believe that insistence on the inexorableness of justice is necessary to the maintenance of virtue; such insistence would mean only hopelessness and despair. Denying men space for repentance, denying the grace which softens the heart, denying the possibility of mercy and forgiveness, shutting the race up to legality and retribution, simply means universal remorse and desperation. The death of Calvary is the most solemn and tremendous

[1] "Bible of Humanity."

sanction ever given to law, and yet it opens a door of escape to a world of sinners. There is forgiveness with Him, and plenteous redemption. Accused and condemned by the law, let us seek that mercy, claim that forgiveness, enter into that liberty, and in the day of doom we shall be hidden in the secret place of the Most High.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF EVIL.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF EVIL.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."—ROM. iii. 20.

HERE the Apostle speaks of the fundamental evil, sin, and of its emergence in our consciousness. Let us notice—

I. *The instrument of conviction.* "By the law." We cannot be justified in the sight of God by the law; we are convicted and condemned by it. The ceremonial portion of the Mosaic law concerned the temple and its service; it was the law of the priesthood. The judicial section comprised the law of the magistrate. The moral law, the highest law of all, is the rule of man's spirit in the sight of God, and this is the instrument of conviction spoken of in the text. Do you ask for a summary of this law? You have it in the ten commandments of Sinai. Do you ask for an exposition of it? Revelation at large is its paraphrase. Do you ask for an example of it? You have the supreme example in Jesus Christ. The law of which our text speaks is the law of inward truth, love, justice, purity, peace, and this is the instrument whose fierce light convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Judging ourselves by social standards only, we convict ourselves of imprudence, impropriety, folly, but the law

of spiritual righteousness reveals the plague of our own heart.

Some are disposed to think lightly of the law given by Moses—it is quite the fashion to do so now; it is considered elementary, crude, inadequate. But is the law thus superficial, coarse, insufficient, in the teaching of Jesus Christ? The Master knew the law in its essence, and we see that in His life it is full of spirit and power. All the beatitudes are but expositions of the commandments, and we feel that they reach the deep seas of the human heart, showing what strange and unsuspected life is stirring down there. The New Testament reveals the law as requiring truth, purity, love, equity, in the inward parts. How profound and searching is the commandment when urged by our Lord! Neither is the law of Moses felt to be superficial and inadequate when it is interpreted to the conscience by the Spirit of God. How it makes bare the thoughts and intents of the heart! Did not Paul feel it to be the candle of the Lord, searching his spirit and convicting him of unrighteousness on a thousand points where he had hitherto regarded himse'f as blameless? Have not thousands in all generations recognized, when the Spirit has moved upon their heart, the revealing, convicting, condemning power of the law, as the Israelites themselves trembled at its proclamation on Sinai? Keats says, "Axioms are not axioms until they have been proved upon our pulses." No; only then does the profound meaning of the simple trite maxim come out; only when experience has brought it home to us, and we have proved it in our conscience or in our heart, do we know the depth of thought, of truth, of pathos, in the familiar proverbs and maxims and commandments which at first sight seem to mean so little. And the

axioms of the moral law are not axioms to us, we do not appreciate their infinite depth and significance, until the Spirit of God has proved them upon our wounded conscience and our troubled heart. It is quite possible for men to have this law in their knowledge without perceiving its large import, possible for them by many devices to make the law of none effect; but when we once apprehend its inwardness, its comprehensiveness, its reasonableness, its graciousness, we feel how great is the disharmony and rebelliousness of our heart and life, and receive the sentence of death within ourselves. The words of Sinai are the expression and transcript of the holiness of God, rays of the eternal Sun, and in the presence of that perfection we are confounded. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

II. *The consciousness of sin.* Without the direct revelation contained in the Bible, man has *a* knowledge of sin; the natural conscience does its office, accusing or else excusing; and there is a direct and serious recognition of sin in all the religions of the world. Whatever our optimistic sceptics may make of it, all the great religions of the world recognize sin, and with great and ingenious elaboration seek to deliver their votaries from its power and consequences. Pagan literature everywhere acknowledges the terrible workings of sin; pagan religions are little more than an attempt to get rid of the burden of sin. Still it remains true, that only by the moral law as declared in the Christian revelation do we come to an adequate knowledge of that dark something which tortures our heart and fills the world with misery.

1. By the law as unfolded in revelation we discover the

fact of sin. It appeals to our conscience and makes us to know sin as a dire reality. "I was alive without the law once." Paul was a proud, self-contained, happy man. He lived with the sense of personal worth, with a serene mind, with a conviction of safety, with the full idea that nothing remained to him but satisfaction and glory. He was troubled in the very least by the awful problem of evil, and felt that whatever might be the problem of evil he had personally the very least concern in it. "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the law came home to him, when he understood its spirituality and far-reaching claim, the sin came to light; he was painfully conscious of an element separating from God and vitiating all life; he felt himself guilty, wretched, condemned.

Renan has recently written, "It may be said, in fact, that original sin was an invention of the Jahveist."[1] What a strange misuse of language to speak of the sacred writers as *inventing* original sin! Can we say that Jenner invented the small-pox, or that Pasteur invented the rabies, or that any of the celebrated physicians invented the maladies which are known by their names? What these famous men did was to successfully diagnose, characterize, and treat diseases which already existed, and which proved their malignant power by carrying thousands of men and women to the grave. Did the sacred writers invent sin? Listen to a modern writer on science who has no theological sympathy whatever, but who is constrained to give a testimony to a theological tenet that is to thousands a huge offence. "Men are born with their moral natures as deformed or as imperfect as their physical ones. To the

[1] "History of the People of Israel."

doctrine of original sin science has thus given an unexpected support."[1] No; revelation did not invent the doctrine of original sin; that doctrine serious men have discerned in all ages, that doctrine the scientist finds deep down in the grounds of human nature. What revelation has done is to define the doctrine, to make clear its real nature, to express its characters, to discover its source, to bring it home to the conscience, and, thank God, to prescribe for it a sovereign remedy.

The law showed the Apostle that the reality of sin was in his own heart, that it lived and worked there beneath all the moral aspects of his character; the law convinced him that his conduct, socially and ecclesiastically blameless, was nevertheless essentially false and hollow. Says George Sand, "Proprieties are the rule of people without soul or virtue."[2] Says Schopenhauer, "Politeness is a conventional and systematic attempt to mask the egoism of human nature. To combine politeness with pride is a masterpiece of wisdom."[3] And, indeed, how little do many of those grand words mean which are on our lips? What does "good form" mean, etiquette, decorum, breeding, "the code of honour," respectability? What do justice, temperance, diligence, benevolence, and other of our virtues mean if they are severely looked into? What do reputation, fame, success, glory, often mean? What the Frenchwoman saw, what the German saw, what we all see dimly from time to time of the hollowness of human virtue, the Apostle in presence of the law saw and felt profoundly; he was overwhelmed to find under all the proprieties of his life the fact and power of sin. "We all do fade as a leaf."

[1] Nisbet, "Marriage and Heredity." [2] "Letters."
[3] "Counsels and Maxims."

Before the searching brightness of the living and eternal righteousness of God our proud virtues wither, for they have no depth of earth, no fibre of reality, no sap of life. Studying the commandments of Sinai; pondering the exposition of the law in prophet, psalmist, and apostle; listening to the Sermon on the Mount; beholding the beauty of the Lord; we become conscious how deeply we are wrong at heart, what a mysterious weakness, disharmony, perverseness exists within us, spoiling our great gifts and possibilities, involving our life in constant failure, filling us with remorse and wretchedness. In the Purgatory of the Chinese is the Mirror of Sin. Into this mirror departed sinners are compelled to gaze and see all the naughtiness of their own heart, after which they are dismissed to punishment. The moral law is that mirror, here and now revealing the wickedness and deceitfulness of our heart. One of our novelists writes of "the tragedy of the mirror." The mirror has its tragedies. It makes palpable to us the ravages of grief; it pathetically discloses the lines of suffering; with cruel literalness it shows the aged the sad work of decay's effacing fingers; but the real tragedy of the mirror is when revelation sharply frees us from all illusions, and from its infinite depths of purity flashes back upon our consciousness the image of our moral self—the image of leprosy.

2. By the law as unfolded in revelation we discover the *nature* of sin. It discloses the real character of that dark mysterious power which forbids our perfection and felicity. Serious souls in all ages have felt the reality, the odiousness, the ominousness of sin, but they found themselves unable to determine wherein lay its real origin and essence. The mystery of iniquity was hid for ages, baffling philosophers,

seers, saints. In the light of the New Testament this mystery is solved. Recent science has enabled us to solve enigmas of the physical universe which once seemed for ever impenetrable. Cholera has been, for example, through long ages "a pestilence walking in darkness." There was no denying the plague, it demonstrated itself in the most awful manner, but none could divine its active principle, the secret of its power. But at last the cholera-germ has been tracked out, and the fatal pest never before seen by human eyes can now be studied under a powerful microscope, large as the human hand. The immense significance of this discovery to our race who may say? For ages sin has been pre-eminently the pestilence walking in darkness, the destruction wasting at noonday, and the world has stood aghast before the obscure and terrible destroyer; but the glass of revelation in the hand of Jesus Christ has shown large and vivid the fatal principle which has tainted and decimated the race.

And what, then, is sin? what is the secret nature of that worst of all plagues, the plague of our own heart? Sin, as against God, is the preference of our own will to the Supreme Will. "I had not known sin except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Sin is not limitation; we act irregularly, not because we are so much less than God, but because we are contrary to God. That sin is only a lesser degree of holiness, that it is but the imperfect effort of a beginner as compared with the absolute and eternal perfection of God, cannot be maintained in the face of revelation. The consciousness of sin arises in us because we will act on our own lines, not on the lines of God, compendiously called righteousness. Sin, as against society, is the exaggeration of our own personal rights to the prejudice

of our neighbour. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is reasonable to respect ourselves, and such self-respect is to be the standard of our conduct in dealing with others. It is sin to push our personal interests and pleasures to the violation of the rights and privileges of our brother; to secure our personal gratification at the expense of society. Sin, as against ourselves, is the preference of our lower to our higher nature. To do justice to our physical and sensuous nature is our bounden duty, but to sacrifice moral truth and beauty to animal sensibilities is sin. Sin is primarily and essentially ungodliness; then it is unsociableness and lasciviousness. Thus the moral commandment brings home to our conscience a distinct indictment. The consciousness of sin is no longer a vague terror; we know wherein we are guilty. "It seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him." In the law is the handwriting that is against us. We are charged with setting our will against the will of the world's Creator and Lord, with lusting after and eating fruit forbidden by eternal wisdom and love. We are charged with a miserable egotism that has blinded us to our brother's right, and caused us to violate his property, liberty, reputation, happiness. We are charged with subordinating our spiritual self to our physical desires; being in honour and understanding not, we have become like the beasts which perish.

3. By the law as unfolded in revelation we discover the *strength* of sin. The presence of the law brings out the virulence and wrath of the evil principle which is in our heart. "When the commandment came, sin revived." "The strength of sin is the law." The presence of the lofty, the pure, the beautiful, in the first instance evokes,

stirs up, draws out, the morbid humours of the soul; the fierce light stimulates the vicious germs which are in us.

Here is the explanation of the strange influence which specially glorious scenery often exercises over men. That scenery seems to stimulate in them morbid elements which less splendid skies and landscapes leave latent. The glory of the outside world brings out the profound discontents of the heart. The purity, the grandeur, the harmony of nature make active and palpable the internal disorder of our humanity, working evil in us by that which is good. Victor Hugo has a remarkable passage on this subject. He has been speaking of two distinguished Frenchmen who had wealth, greatness, dignity, health, intelligence, and who, to the surprise of everybody, committed suicide at Naples. "Is it the climate? Is it the marvellous sky? As the life of even the most prosperous man is always in reality more sad than gay, a gloomy sky is in harmony with ourselves. A brilliant and joyous sky mocks us. Nature in its sad aspects resembles us and consoles us; nature, when radiant, impassive, serene, magnificent, transplendent, young, while we grow old, smiling when we are sighing, superb, inaccessible, eternal, contented, calm in its joyousness, has in it something oppressive."[1] It weighs upon us, it irritates us, it drives us to despair. Nature is a system of glorious law, and its action reveals the vanity, weakness, disorder, and despair of the world within us. The great poet just quoted says, "The blue sky engenders spleen," but that hardly explains all; let us say the spectacle of the glorious world makes us sad because that spectacle is not repeated within, and the presence of such law and loveliness makes us bitterly conscious of the chaos of the soul.

[1] "Things Seen."

That the presence of the lofty and noble calls out into special activity the baser qualities of our nature is seen in the influence that intellectual and artistic excellence often exert. Ruskin says, "No people has ever attained the higher stages of art skill except at a period of its civilization which was sullied by frequent, violent, and even monstrous crime."[1] And he accounts for this on the ground that the good and the beautiful are developed to their highest by contention with evil. However true this explanation may be, is it not also true that the bad and the ugly are developed to their highest by contention with good? The exceptional and terrible wickedness of the Renaissance, its incest, treason, rapine, assassinations, fratricides, its black and horrible crimes, was a sardonic protest against the vision of beauty then granted to men, a resurgence and revolt against the higher perfection and harmony then expressed in music, painting, statuary, literature, and building. Evil worked by that which was good.

Our text declares that the presence of the moral law thus, in an eminent degree, calls out the potential wickedness of the heart. As the splendour of nature revives in us the sense of vanity and despair, as the glories of art create a reaction toward lawlessness and infamy, so the presence of transcendent moral excellence kindles irregular passion and desire. This is the explanation of the outbursts of profound wickedness in Israel; in their reactions from the noble moral system committed to them, the elect people became worse than the heathen. This is the explanation also of the singular and conspicuous power of wickedness displayed in the days of our Lord. The presence of One who was truth, beauty, love, righteousness, irritated and

[1] "Lectures on Art."

developed the mighty force of wickedness in the national heart; the epoch of the Advent was the epoch of diabolism, it was the hour and the power of darkness. And history shows that this has ever been the case; that any extraordinary manifestation of moral power and beauty has provoked displays of sin, unique in cruelty, irrationality, selfishness, degradation. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." And yet it exasperates the soul, inflames it, sets it in an attitude of guilty defiance. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." We do not know the power of indwelling sin until we awake to righteousness, and seek to fulfil that righteousness. We do not know the force of a stream until we attempt to dam it, or to swim against it; and we never know the force of the dark stream of passion, issuing from the great deep of our heart and sweeping through our life, until the law summons us to breast it; then we know what sin means, as it lifts up its angry waves and bears us onward to the gulf, mocking our agonizing attempts to stem it.

4. By the law as unfolded in revelation we discover the *guilt* of sin. It is the ministry of condemnation; it convinces us that our transgressions are worthy of death. With the law before us we cannot plead that sin is ignorance. Sin is the transgression of the law, but we should think mercifully of sin committed in total ignorance of the law. But the law which convicts us, first enlightens us; we clearly see our duty and yet persist in carrying out our own desires. With the law before us we cannot plead that sin is imperfection. It is now seen that sin is not finiteness, but contradictoriness; it is a conflict of wills. With the law

before us we cannot plead that sin is misfortune. By the deepest of instincts we discern the vast difference between a misfortune and a sin. The man who is overtaken by blindness, crippled by rheumatism, prostrated by paralysis, mutilated by a collision or an explosion, we pity and console; but we blame and punish theft, libel, insobriety, violence. By the commandments are we forewarned, and we know that in the keeping of them is great reward; after such warning and enlightenment we cannot rank sins with accidents and misfortunes. With the law before us we cannot plead that sin is fate. Just as the laws of nature work out eclipses, volcanoes, earthquakes, storms, hurricanes, blizzards, so the same laws, we are told, work out in human nature tempers, lusts, conceits, which war against the law of the mind. But with the highest law of God before us we cannot believe this. Sin is seen to be no part of the divine order, no necessary disagreeable factor in the education of the individual or the race; the voice of Sinai repudiates it absolutely, declares it to be altogether unnatural, subversive, diabolical, and accursed. The law given by Moses is a right royal law, just and gracious, practicable, and to violate it is to involve our soul in infinite guilt and condemnation, is to count ourselves unworthy of everlasting life.

And the law brings sin and guilt home to us personally. It does not impeach and condemn a race, so much as it challenges the man, the woman, the child. We often say that "a corporation has no soul to damn," which saying roughly expresses our practical perception of the fact that responsibility inheres in the individual. The copious use of the personal pronoun by the Apostle in the famous seventh chapter of the Romans is not without its deep

significance. It is full of "I's." "I had not known sin;" "I was alive without the law;" "I died;" "O wretched man that I am;" "I thank God through Jesus Christ." Twenty more "I's" sprinkle the page which reveals the working of the law on the conscience and heart. Now, the Apostle does not thus keep close to his own personality for any rhetorical or logical reason; he felt the personal bearing of the law, that it concerned him in the presence of God, and he simply gave vivid expression to this most solemn and essential truth. We are all ready enough with the "I" of a miserable consuming egotism; grand thing it is when our heart and mouth are full of the "I," "me," "my," of a deep and blessed penitence. Then we no longer impute our wickedness to cosmic causes, to social environment, to hereditary influence, but confess that the burden and shame are our own. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." In conclusion—

(1) A word to *those who have no proper consciousness of sin.* Some of us have little consciousness of sin. We have writers who treat the question of sin with levity; and many who worship in our sanctuaries, and who often have the claims of spiritual righteousness enforced upon them, do not lay their sinfulness to heart. But we must remember that a faint consciousness of sin is no sign of comparative innocence. Sin usually brings with it a certain blindness, dulness, indifference, and the very worst sinners are often least conscious of sin. One of the most astonishing things in prison-life is said to be the deficiency of conscience in criminals. Scenes of heart-rending despair are rarely witnessed amongst them. Their sleep is broken by no

uneasy dreams; on the contrary, it is easy and sound: they have also excellent appetites. They have a sense of self-righteousness, and feel, on the whole, that they have been wronged. Recently the newspaper told us of the execution of a gravedigger upon the Continent, who had been convicted of four murders, five robberies, eight cases of incendiarism, and other crimes. When he was informed that he would be hanged early next morning, he said that he deserved his fate, but he assured his judge that worse fellows than he were running about the world. No, not within prison-walls does the conscience assert itself and fill the convict with overwhelming distress and shame. The restlessness, the wakefulness, the agony of a troubled conscience, are known outside by little children, by pure women, by high-minded men whose faults are comparatively venial. To have no consciousness of sin, no proper consciousness of it, is no proof of our integrity; much more likely is it a proof that our conscience has become benumbed and indurated by years of worldliness and disobedience.

We must come to the light that we may be reproved. We must test ourselves by the standard of Sinai; we must try our heart and life by the terrible beauty and spirituality of the sayings of the Mount; we must submit ourselves to the white light which shines upon us and into us in the perfection of Jesus Christ. If we can bear all this untroubled, we are innocent indeed. But we cannot bear it; none of us can bear it. When the law is interpreted to our conscience by the Spirit of God, our braveries of self-righteousness are gone, and we feel the sentence of death within ourselves. Before the law came home we had an imperfect and vague perception of sin, but now we know

what sin means. We know that we are sinful; not only that we have committed sins, but that the powers and passions and desires of our nature are themselves depraved. We know that sin is not so much in the outward act as in the thought and disposition. We know that sin not only provokes vengeance, but the intrinsic sinfulness of sin is recognized by us. We know that sin is not a certain injustice to society merely, but chiefly a dire offence against God. We know that sin is a fact not to be easily atoned for, that it is a stain not to be washed out even with our tears and blood. In us, and in all men, there is by nature a brooding consciousness of sin, but it is only when the Holy Spirit takes the law and flashes its spiritual meaning into our heart that we gain the proper notion of sin; that, in a word, we see sin as God sees it. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

(2) We must remember that *the law does not give us deliverance from sin.* Discovering our moral deficiency and defilement, the law does not make us perfect. Some time ago one of the magistrates at Clerkenwell hit on a new idea in dealing with a prisoner, who came before him on a charge of being drunk and incapable. The man's face was terribly bruised, either from tumbling about while drunk, or fighting. The case having been proved, the magistrate inquired of the chief gaoler for a looking-glass. One having been produced, the gaoler was ordered to take the prisoner and show him his face in the glass, and then to liberate him; the magistrate remarking that if that exhibition was not a warning to him, he did not know what would be. The prisoner was accordingly shown the reflection of his dis-

figured face, and discharged. There was sound philosophy in the novel method of the magistrate, it was good and true as far as it went; but it may well be doubted if the generous device effected any very considerable reformation in the prisoner; much more being necessary to make a man what he ought to be, than the frank vision of what he is. We often entertain exaggerated notions of the necessary result of seeing ourselves as we are. The boast of the theatre is that it holds up the mirror to human nature; but most people know that this self-revelation has little moralizing effect. In fiction the reader is called upon to contemplate the strange sad workings of his own heart; but the consequence of all such studies is little more than transient agitation of feeling. In the sanctuary men often start at their own image; but, if they stop short with the alarming vision, the practical advantage is small. Conviction of sin is not regeneration. Sometimes the self-revelation produces hatred of the law. I dare say, if the prisoner at Clerkenwell had given free expression to his feelings, he would have smashed the mirror; and men in all ages, often in strange ways, have vented their wrath upon the man, the system, the book, which brought them self-acquaintance. Sometimes self-revelation is a painful lightning-flash, soon forgotten. We see "the face of our birth" in the glass, and going our way straightway forget what manner of man we are. Sometimes this self-revelation is followed by cynicism and despair.

> "I had most need of blessing, and amen
> Stuck in my throat."

Never does the action of the law purify us from the morbid elements it reveals. The law makes nothing perfect, but alike with the individual and the race it serves to bring in a better hope.

(3) *The redemption of our life is in Christ Jesus.* Christ turns the knowledge of sin into true sorrow for sin. So far as the operation of the law is concerned, the knowledge of sin may end, as we have seen, in anger, remorse, cynicism, or despair; but Christ changes the sorrow that is unto death into a diviner grief, whose issue is eternal life. Christ shows us most emphatically that it is not severity that we have been resisting, not might, but love infinitely great and tender. What makes the tears stream down the cheeks of the prodigal, but that he remembers a father's goodness, a mother's love? What makes the hard, proud husband go meekly to his wife's grave and strew it with tear-sprinkled flowers, but the fact that he has understood at last her unrequited kindness? And so the true sorrow for sin is created by the vision of the beauty and love of God, and this vision is given by Christ. Christ also awakens in us the love of holiness. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Yes, the law as given by Moses is altogether concerned with sin; it defines sin, it addresses sinners, its design is to convince and condemn. In certain places we see regulations like these placarded: "No smoking allowed," "No betting allowed," "No swearing allowed;" and we perceive at once the kind of place we are in, and the kind of people who usually frequent them—that is sufficiently clear from the prohibitory legislation. We never think of putting up such regulations in a temple. So the commandments of Moses assume this to be a sinful world; they are addressed to sinners; there is in them the idiom of impeachment and condemnation. But by Christ is the knowledge of goodness; by Him came grace and truth; it was His high and holy vocation in a very special sense to reveal to the world the charm, the splendour, the infinite sweetness and

majesty of goodness, and to beget in the human heart a supreme passion for the beauty of holiness. Christ also satisfies the law, making it honourable, and yet strengthening us to fulfil all its conditions. We have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sin. The law leaves us with a burden of condemnation, but in Christ the divine assurance is writ large: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy trangressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee." And He fills the penitent heart with saving cleansing power. The law is a revealing mirror; Christ is a transforming, transfiguring mirror.

How infinite our debt to Jesus Christ! It is a common charge against Christianity by a certain class of writers, that it has darkened the world. They tell us of the Greeks, "a people who counted their years by their games," and they are full of regret that the Christian faith prevailed, banishing the song, the sunshine, the sparkle of Grecian genius and life. But are we not infinitely the debtors of Jesus Christ for substituting the troubles of the conscience for the serene harmony of Grecian wisdom, the light laughter of Grecian joyousness? Has not Christ by awakening the conscience disciplined human nature, and enriched it beyond all expression? Has He not made it unspeakably more strong and profound, a nobler thing altogether? Paul says, "I was alive without the law once." Again he writes, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." What an infinite difference there was between those two lives! The first

a life of petty thoughts, of narrow sympathies, of disguised selfishness, of ignoble aims and satisfactions, of a superficial gladness and hope. But the second life! who shall tell the wealth of that? Through interior humiliations, crucifixions, deaths, the Apostle came into a life of knowledge, strength, and peace which had not hitherto entered into his heart to conceive; a life of large ideas, of emotions at once blissful and profound, of delightful fellowships, of sublime charity, of most glorious hope. The opulence, the greatness, the blessedness of that life of faith, the Apostle with all his inspired eloquence could never tell. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

THE EXTINCTION OF EVIL.

THE EXTINCTION OF EVIL.

"Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—JOHN iii. 3.

WE have already considered evil in several of its aspects, but it were sad indeed if we were compelled to stop here. What would all our science be worth, discerning everywhere in nature a majestic order and harmony, if it left our heart the prey of invincible weakness and confusion? What consolation would our art afford us if, whilst filling our halls with grace and loveliness, it left our character incurably deformed and disfigured? What pride could we feel in all our triumphs of government and civilization if at last the anarchy of the soul were left untouched? But, thank God, we need not to stop here. It is our privilege to contemplate the abolition of evil, the full deliverance of the afflicted soul from its power and being. To say that we must be born again is to say that we can be born again, so becoming new creatures, walking in newness of life. In the days of His flesh Christ addressed two great representative characters—the Pharisee and the Publican; and these are the representative characters in all generations. Christ had one message for them both: "Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I. Let us consider the bearing of the doctrine of regeneration on the *moral classes*. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, one who believed that he could attain to righteousness by carefully observing certain rules of conduct and worship. He fasted, he prayed, he gave tithes, he was careful about ablutions, dress, sacred things and sacred days; far more than this, he conformed to the moral precepts of the law with more or less precision; and thus the Pharisee trusted to grow into holiness. But Christ says to Nicodemus in so many words, This can never be; you cannot thus educate yourself into goodness; you cannot become a saint through routine and ritual, through a mechanical compliance with the letter of the law: to become really righteous you must be born from above. Plato was inclined to believe that virtue was not really teachable, or to be acquired by any prescribed discipline, but that it was the special volition and grace of the gods; and Christ taught this truth distinctly and emphatically. The suggestion and interrogation of the Greek, passes into clear revelation in the Master. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And these words of Christ are obviously reasonable. Can one become a genius by rule and learning? Can we make a poet, a painter, or a musician by discipline? Can we produce masterpieces by following precepts and patterns? We know well the impossibility of this. We may give students true theories of art, exact and detailed instructions for the attainment of excellence; we may set before them splendid models, and animate them with the prospect of precious prizes; but however slavishly and

doggedly they put themselves to school, conscientiously observing every item in the educational programme, they never become artists except the genius was inborn—at last they are only imitators, mannerists, pedants. We say truly, poets must be born. Yes, poets in words, in sounds, in colours, they must be born; they cannot be manufactured. The power of beauty, harmony, eloquence, must be in their soul, born in them; and if they do not come into the world trailing these clouds of glory, you can never drill them into artistic perfection. Now, goodness cannot be taught any more than genius can. We cannot make men holy by system any more than we can make poets by system. Pure and noble deeds cannot be executed through discipline any more than the masterpieces of art can be produced that way. The position of our Lord in the text is, we cannot become truly holy by any attention whatever to philosophical, ethical, or ecclesiastical rules; we become holy only as the Holy Ghost comes down into our heart, planting there the genius of heavenly power and love.

And do not thousands of moral men feel this to be the case? They very exactly and assiduously observe moral precepts and ecclesiastical order without ever feeling the reality of goodness, that is, the power and liberty and gladness of goodness. Whatever genius does, it does with rapture. What an inexpressible pleasure it must have been to Angelo to paint, to Shakespeare to write, to Handel to play! But it is a joyless thing to write, sing, speak, paint, without force and fire. Now, multitudes of men are moral without inspiration or delight; the life of virtue is dry, dull, and irksome. Not being inborn, living, and spontaneous, righteousness lacks richness, exuberance, victory. The

saints of the Old Testament did not find obedience to the highest law a bondage; neither did the saints of the New Testament. Their experience was full of the sense of gladness as summer skies are full of the music of larks and nightingales. And such is the life of goodness in the saints of to-day: it is to them freedom, rapture, glory—the statutes of God are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage. The saints must come where Plato, Shakespeare, and Newton came from—from God; then only are they winged, coming and going with triumphant music.

But are not some men born saints? do they not come into the world as such? It is affirmed that these holy men and women inherit a peculiarly spiritual and tender nature, and that the whole of their noble and beautiful life is the result of a singularly delicate and happy constitution. "The genuine saint is a moral genius of a peculiar kind; he is born, not made. You must have a very fine and peculiar organization to be a true Christian; a special genius, which generally declares itself in early life, as special genius is apt to do. A Sister Agnes or Mother Margaret take to vital religion with the spontaneous affinity that Mozart took to music, Newton to mathematics, and Keats to poetry. Religious genius, in its highest form, is as rare, perhaps more rare, than genius in any other form; and exalted piety is as unattainable to the common herd as exalted poetry." [1] Men of sublime moral qualities are the choice products of human nature; they would have been illustrious in whatever age of the world they might have lived, and with whatever creed they might have held; their moral superiority is the consequence of their superior fibre, temperament, and force. Rare as suns, we are to believe

[1] "The Service of Man."

that, like suns, they rise upon the earth full of inherent power and splendour. But is this so? St. John, we presume, was a saint; was he from the beginning tender and loving? The evidence is altogether the other way. Was Peter a saint with a history at all resembling Mr. Morison's theory? We know better. Was Paul a natural saint? No; these holy men tell us how they experienced a profound regeneration; how their nobler life arose out of the action of supernatural grace. John is full of this glorious thought. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him;" "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Listen to Peter. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Paul never ceases to dwell on the interior crisis which ushers in the saintly life. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation;" "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This Pharisee knew most clearly that we must become "new men" to walk in true holiness of life. No man is born a saint; a pure and fervent heart is never the result of organization. If we are to believe the saints themselves, they were born from above, and by the grace of

God attained and perfected the shining virtues by which they were adorned.

To lift us into the highest life of all, there must be a supernatural act, a breaking forth in the soul of a new divine power and love. The greatest living evolutionist holds the essential identity of man's bodily structure with that of the animal world, and that man's bodily structure has been derived from the lower animals, of which he is the culminating development. But Wallace will not allow that man's entire nature, and all his faculties, moral, intellectual, spiritual, have been derived from their rudiments in the lower animals. Man has faculties, mathematical, musical, artistic, moral, which have not been developed by the same laws which have fashioned the physical man. And the facts compel us to recognize some origin for them wholly distinct from that which has served to account for the animal characteristics. This great scientist teaches that there are at least three stages in the development of the organic world when some new cause or power must necessarily have come into action. The first stage is the change from inorganic to organic; the next is the introduction of sensation or consciousness; the third stage is the existence in man of a number of his most characteristic and noblest faculties, those which raise him furthest above the brutes and open up possibilities of almost indefinite advancement. With a miracle all things begin, with a power and method transcending all our thought and comprehension; and in successive stages of development the spiritual universe must assert itself, lifting the creatures to higher planes of intellectual and moral life. This great scientist cannot believe that the working of mere material law will account for the exaltation of humanity; he believes in the spiritual

universe, and in fresh and extraordinary manifestations of its power in the tangible world. So Christianity declares that in human experience and character we cannot attain the life of spiritual righteousness by any gradual movement on the lines of ordinary cultivation, education, and discipline; but a new cause and power, a new enduement of heavenly light and grace, is necessary to lift the soul into the largest and noblest life. As an extraordinary action of the Spirit is necessary to explain the passage in nature from the inorganic to the organic, from the vegetable to the conscious, from animal sensibility to moral sense and reason; so the extraordinary action of the Spirit is essential if policy is to pass into virtue, if prudence is to become righteousness, if propriety is to rise into that diviner thing called holiness, if morality is to attain to the noble goodness that is good before God. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Brethren, let us not stop short of this change, for stopping short of this we miss our glorious calling and hope. Evolutionists speak of a species they denominate the "Almost-man;"[1] that is, the ape-like creature that climbed high, but just failed to reach the line of rationality. Yet what a mighty gulf stretched between the "almost-man" and the man who knows, and reasons, and prays! The inferior creature, supposed by another impulse and evolvement to become true man, has yet to acquire reason, conscience, language; all the imperial faculties are to be attained in that last step, short as it may seem. Between the brute and man a gulf opens that is infinitely wide at its straitest part—a gulf that no evolutionist can fill. The inferior thing cannot insensibly glide into the noble being

[1] "Darwin's Life," vol. ii. p. 227.

—it is unthinkable. When the brute has touched its highest, a miracle is still required to constitute it man—to make the almost, altogether. At that crisis a vital spark was called for; a birth from above, a divine element must be introduced before the beast, raised to the highest as a beast, could receive its apotheosis and rank with rational beings. Thus is it with the Almost-Christian, and the genuine son of God. There is a mighty gulf indeed between the highest Pharisee and him who is least in the kingdom of God. If the finished formalist is to become a truly righteous man, an hour will come when the Holy Spirit will work a miraculous change in his heart, filling it with the visions and charities and enthusiasms of a new life. Paul was an almost Christian, so was Luther, so was Wesley, so was Chalmers; but how profound and memorable was the change which made them Christians indeed and of a truth! "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." We notice—

II. The bearing of the doctrine of the text on the *immoral classes.* Christ speaks thus to the publican—to the openly, grossly wicked, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." For all such there is no way of escape except in the doctrine of regeneration. If we do not receive Christ's words as the statement of a glorious possibility, we must regard with despair the masses about us. Our science, our observation, our experience, prove to us that there is no deliverance from the power of sin except in some such doctrine as this.

1. Think of the power of *inherited constitution.* Theologians have long talked of original sin, of inherited predispositions to evil, which so far as our powers are concerned are absolutely overwhelming and entirely incurable. After

the theologians have been roundly abused for centuries for what was called their horrible and incredible dogma, philosophers come to their aid and furnish a scientific basis for the evangelical creed. Scientists and theologians, in fact and substance, speak much in the same way about transmitted sin, although they use different terminology; they alike declare that men inherit powerful tendencies to evil, and that these radical tendencies will beat us do what we will. The prophet bids Israel "look to the hole of the pit whence they are digged." Terrible vision that, if we look sheer down into the awful pit of our origin, the mass of humanity out of which we have emerged! It is humiliating and discouraging indeed to think of the ferocity, the lust, the hideous cruelty, the horrid cannibalism, the drunkenness, the filth, the falsity, the wretchedness unutterable of the past races out of which we have arisen. We may have no family genealogy, and that may be another unreckoned mercy of ours, but the grey fathers have left their mark upon us; their story is written with more or less clearness in our constitution; bound up in our heart are the reminiscences of their weakness, their wickedness, their barbarism. Can we by any skill or resolution throw off this constitution? As the old dramatist expresses man's desire to escape from self—

> "Can man by no means creep out of himself,
> And leave the slough of viperous grief behind?"

We can prevent these morbid tendencies breaking forth in practical life into criminal misdeeds, but our philosophers are right in insisting that we cannot in any deep sense get rid of the tyranny of a constitution hereditarily depraved.

We sometimes say that "a man is cured of his faults," but how little that generally means! It means no more

than that he has learned to keep down the violent outward manifestation of irregularities of temper and desire. A man with a constitutional tendency to gout may keep the malady under by constant watchfulness, but it is there, it is always ready to break out afresh, it is ever giving its victim twinges, and the slightest indiscretion lays him up again; so men are cured of their faults, being all the time a long way from getting rid of them. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." If there is any salvation from the defiling and triumphant power of inherited characters of evil, it is in the glorious doctrine of a birth from above.

2. Think of the power of *circumstance.* Some of our philosophers tell us that circumstances entirely dominate a man, determining his life just as a channel determines the direction and fortunes of the stream which flows in it. That this view requires qualification most men will admit. It is wonderful, for example, how a man of resolution will triumph over physical defects—the blind becoming discerning, the stammerer eloquent, the weak strong. And it is equally wonderful how men of decision triumph over environment. Genius levels mountains, spans rivers, causes wildernesses to blossom, links together with electric chains the ends of the earth. The gifted man cares not for difficulties; like a mountain-torrent, he gains momentum from every obstacle; a master-athlete, he throws the world. Masters of circumstance in many directions, but how soon we succumb to circumstance when it relates to character! He who is triumphantly strong in other directions is helpless here; he who heroically and magnificently succeeds in fortune ignobly fails in morals. He who successfully battles

with circumstances to become a scholar, is vanquished by fleshly desires; he who becomes rich in the teeth of circumstances, is then mastered and degraded by his riches; he who surmounts circumstances to become great, immediately falls a victim to luxury and pride. Men make a grand fight with circumstance in the kingdoms of nature and society, but a sorry fight with circumstances as these menace the kingdom of the spirit; they fail most where it is exactly most desirable that they should succeed.

It is only in the birth from above that we rise above the despotism of things, places, and events. Filled with spiritual knowledge, sympathy, conviction, hope, we become masters of circumstance in the moral sphere, as the sons of genius assert mastery in the material sphere, subjecting it to their will, their interest, their pleasure. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Here speaks a man who has been created in Christ Jesus, and who in the power of a new life is able to employ all worldly circumstance to pure and immortal uses. He who is filled with the love of God, the enthusiasm of righteousness, the hope of immortality, is clothed with the sun, the moon being under his feet.

3. Think of the power of *habit*. The philosopher maintains the power of habit, its invincible power, and much must be conceded to him on this point. He is severe upon any theory which tends to discredit or underrate habit. He will only allow that inveterate habit may very rarely be broken by an act of volition. An act often repeated establishes in the man a bias which is organic and

invincible. Men go on for years with their evil thinkings, speakings, doings, and yet all the while fancy that they can at will adopt a new course of action whenever they may think it advisable. No mistake can be greater or more fatal. Link by link do men forge for themselves these more than iron fetters; instead of finding themselves able to burst these bonds, they are terrified to find they have fastened upon themselves "everlasting chains." Slowly and insidiously do the evil habits grow until they become as gnarled crooked trees which none may straighten; little by little the gossamer thread becomes a cart-rope which none may break; imperceptibly does the film of ice spread over the river, holding the waters before long in a grasp which Niagara could not burst. The character is stereotyped; the life moves in deep downward grooves. Says the modern determinist, "By habit the mind is reduced into servitude." Says the Apostle, "We are sold under sin."

Only a birth from above can emancipate us from the dominant power of evil habit. "Ardent love, gratitude, and veneration for Christ, *when* kindled, *are* able to snap the chains of habit, and sometimes to prevent their being welded together again."[1] Yes; even the agnostic must confess this, that Christ can so fill the soul with nobler passions as to break finally the power of inbred sin, confirmed by long-continued practical transgression. Only the grace of regeneration can do this, but that grace does effect the glorious conversion, and not rarely. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with

[1] Morison.

mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." When the Spirit of God descends into the soul, filling it with profound emotion, royal power, unquenchable love,—evil instincts, associations, habits, fall away like broken fetters, and the soul walks abroad in glorious liberty.

We cannot deny the thraldom of inherited character, the tyranny of circumstances, the power of habit. It is the cry of the convicted sinner so vividly rendered by Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Entirely hopeless is the agonized soul. To what, then, are we shut up? Absolute despair, or the doctrine of regeneration—this is the alternative. Says the agnostic, "There is no remedy for a bad heart." Never were truer words spoken. There *is* no remedy for a bad heart—this is the fundamental position of Christianity; therefore it comes with its doctrine of regeneration, its miracle of a new creation, its supernatural grace to implant and sustain a heavenly life. That there is no remedy for a bad heart is the precise reason why Christ proffers us a new one. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Our first birth brought with it all the evils of the flesh—weakness, appetite, suffering, mortality. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The second birth brings with it the infinite strength and wealth of the Eternal Spirit of love and truth and purity.

(1) Let none stay short of this great change. No mere reformation will suffice. Reformation out of pre-existing materials means little when those elements are base; what

is wanted most of all are new elements. Reformation promises much and yields little whilst it works with the old corrupt and tarnished material; only when the wood, hay, stubble of the old life are replaced by the silver, gold, and precious stones of new thoughts and affections can we build a temple that God will inhabit. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." No other reformation than this will suffice; changed form, because of changed essence. No mere education will suffice. Education brings out what is in, but we have seen that the contents of our nature are such that something very different to education is called for. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Not God Himself. And yet how current is the notion that by some alchemy we shall get humility out of pride, charity out of selfishness, purity out of lust, meekness out of ferocity, peace out of passion! It is thought by many that time and discipline are alone wanted to bring out of this poor nature a perfect man. When the good things are planted in us they may be cherished and trained into glorious perfection, but they must be planted first. Least of all will any mere decoration suffice. A watch failing to keep time will not be corrected by any jewelling of the case; painting the organ-pipes will not improve the music; whitewashing the pump will not purify the water. Society in various ways seeks to gild the exterior, but what we need is beauty of life springing from truth in the inward parts. Let none of us stop short of this—the love and purity of God filling our breast. Out of the heart are the issues of life.

(2) We must remember that this change is wrought in us only through the power of God in Jesus Christ. Men

can manipulate, but God alone can create. In the beginning God created and made all that is; and the same powerful voice that called the stars out of the depths must create in us new instincts, sympathies, and desires, new powers of thought and feeling and will. He who caused the light to shine out of the darkness must shine into our heart. If any man will live a new life he must go to the Father of spirits; he must cry with the psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And this power of God works through Jesus Christ. Here, indeed, comes in the whole justification of Christianity. If humanity needed nothing more than culture, reform, adornment, then Christianity is a vast and profound mistake, then Christ died in vain; but if the spirit within us is to be reached and changed, we see the reason for the glorious truth, the infinite love, the mighty hope of the Gospel. The grace which absolves, quickens, hallows the penitent heart, is the grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. And how many proofs we have of the fact and power of this grace! The geologist tells us that ages ago vast and horrible creatures filled the air and waters—fierce and hideous monsters swarmed and fought in the primæval slime; but in due time God swept away mastodon, mammoth, megatherium, and filled the world with mild and beautiful forms of life. But to-day we see moral changes wrought far more wonderful than any to which the petrifactions of the geologist witness; we see the power of Christ destroying passions far more terrible than the lizards, serpents, and crocodiles of the antediluvian world, creating graces sweeter and fairer than the choicest forms of perfected nature. "In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, is grass with reeds and rushes." Brethren, feeling

the entire inefficacy of every self-effort to bring your life up to a really worthy standard, claim the grace of God in Christ, and you shall exult with the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

(3) Let no man despair of this change being wrought in him. "Can a man be born when he is old?" To give an affirmative answer to this question Christ came into the world. An old man may look upon this summer world throbbing with energy, breaking into flowers, into songs, putting forth radiant fruits, instinct with life, after long ages yet overflowing with force, riches, joy; but the patriarch with feeble step and dim eye can never hope again to share in the full magnificent life which flows around him, blossoming in the tree, trilling in the bird, shooting in the grass—the fire will no more come to his eye, the colour to his cheek, the energy to his limbs; the lost glory can no more be renewed; the wind passeth over him and he is gone. But the weak and perishing soul may be re-born, filled with new power, bathed in an atmosphere rich with precious stimulations. Here is the miracle of miracles—a penitent and obedient soul may share in the magnificent moral life which Christ has made to flow through the universe of perishing souls. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Claim this grace, "and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning."

(4) Let us be co-workers with God towards this new creation. We must not make the grace of God in vain.

We feel how great was the power which fashioned this lovely world out of elements so opaque and intractable. But here the word of God immediately prevailed—the granite was plastic, the hills were responsive, the winds were obedient, the dark waters kissed the feet of Him who walked on them. But it is another and far harder thing to mould a spirit in which inheres independence and strange powers of inertia and opposition. "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them." But a few chapters further we read, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" God was to give them a new heart, and they were to make for themselves a new heart; in other words, by thought, prayer, and endeavour they were to co-operate with the Divine grace to the desired end. Let us yield ourselves to God, and the new creation shall soon appear in us, whilst the morning stars shall sing together a new song, and all the sons of God shout for joy over the recovery of a soul as they never did over the creation of a sun.

THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people."—DEUT. xxxiii. 2, 3.

AT first sight the text might seem to involve a contradiction, but closer consideration will show that it expresses a great truth, viz. that the severity of human life is an expression of the Divine goodness.

I. We briefly consider the truth of the text as it finds expression in *nature*. The fiery law published at Sinai is proclaimed from every mountain-top; it burns and blazes through all the earth; the sea also is crystal mingled with fire. In all ages men have felt the sternness of nature. Cicero speaks of her as our stepmother; and the longer the world lasts, the more fully do we realize, the more keenly do we feel, the severity and inviolableness of the laws of the physical universe. The fiery law is universal; it is inevitably associated with unorganized matter, with organized matter, and with sentient beings. Nature knows nothing of indulgence; she makes no concessions to ignorance, folly, or weakness; her profound and majestic arrangements are to be respected; and those who dare to set themselves in opposition to these arrangements are forthwith wiped out. Nature is imperative, uncompromising, terrible. "From His right hand went a fiery law for them." A

lofty and unyielding commandment is written over all things, and behind the fiery law is a right hand capable of enforcing it to the utmost, of exacting the last farthing of the overwhelming penalty.

And yet this severity everywhere discerned is not malevolent, but benign; it is constructive, more than it is destructive; its action is to save, to heighten, to perfect. In our day the severity of nature has been recognized as "the struggle for existence," and students have shown with great clearness and power how full the world is of antagonism and suffering; yet these same students distinctly perceive that the struggle for existence is at bottom merciful, and that whenever nature chooses an evil it is a lesser evil to prevent a greater.

1. They see the advantage of severity so far as all sound and healthy things are concerned. If the conditions of life are in any degree softened, it is to the detriment of the noble organisms concerned. Give a creature with a fine organization an easy, pleasant lot, and the process of degeneration immediately sets in; in the course of a few generations the pampered thing loses its larger brain, its power of vision, its exquisite sense, its strength and speed, and becomes a mere parasite, altogether degraded and contemptible. But, once more, let the conditions of life to that creature become severe; let it be reduced to a state of hunger, danger, and painfulness; let food be scarce, enemies abundant, climate harsh and bitter, and the fallen creature begins to recover its lost glory, until in a few generations it has attained once more all the complexity, vitality, and beauty of which that special organism is susceptible. The student of nature knows well that the fiery law, the law which demands constant awareness, movement,

tension, resistance, endeavour, is the law of salvation and perfecting to the whole animal world.

2. These students of nature see also the advantage of severity so far as defective things are concerned. It does, indeed, seem harsh that by the law of the world weak things go to the wall, and it is often difficult to reconcile ourselves to the grim fact. The potter who has to maintain a great reputation will not permit, on any consideration, a defective article bearing his name to go forth to the world; each piece must be true in shape and colour and finish, or else, whatever may be its general worth and beauty, it is ruthlessly broken and cast with the rubbish to the void. Now, whatever regret we might sometimes feel to see a beautiful vase doomed to the potsherds because of some slight flaw, we should not experience any very acute distress; neither do we feel any such distress when in nature we witness the similar elimination of unfitting plants and flowers. But it is a different thing when we witness the stern destruction of sentient life. Then conscious loss and suffering come into the question, and we cannot see living creatures with many merits and charms blotted out without experiencing the sense of pain and perplexity. Yet the scientist sees truly that the fiery law which smites weakness into the dust is just as kind as the sweet light of the sun. It is better for the world at large that weak organisms should be eliminated, otherwise the earth would be filled with imperfection and wretchedness; it is better for the creatures concerned that they should perish, for why should a miserable existence be indefinitely prolonged?

So, then, the law of the world is not mild, indulgent, grandmotherly; it is a fiery law, a law calling for exertion, courage, circumspection, sacrifice, persistency, and it

avenges itself by the annihilation of whatever is ignorant, incapable, indolent, weak, or disobedient. And yet this austerity is essentially kind. The struggle for existence is only seemingly cruel; the keen strife going on everywhere between plant and plant, animal and animal, bird and bird, insect and insect, the internecine, interminable strife, the push and pull, the storm and strain, the toil and trial of the whole creation, has lifted this glorious world out of the mud, filled it with a myriad splendid forms, peopled it with millions of creatures capable of maintaining life and capable of enjoying it. "From His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people."

II. We consider the text as it finds expression in *civilization*. The law of civilization is a fiery law. It is not by gentle yielding restrictions, by pliant understandings, by soft phrases, by light penalties easily remitted, by facility and complaisance, by the coddling of the individual, and the pampering of the nations, but by laws most exacting and rigorous, that God governs the race and conducts it to ultimate perfection. And yet once more we may see that the fiery law is only a definition of love.

1. Take the struggle of man with *nature*. The tropical sun burns us; the Arctic cold freezes us; in temperate regions the changeability of the weather troubles us; and everywhere we experience the fury of the elements. All climates and countries have their special inconveniences, inhospitalities, and scourges, and everywhere men live in a more or less decided conflict with the elements and seasons. Through constant vigilance, labour, fatigue, and suffering, arising from the confusions and severities of nature, do the great mass of civilized men manage to live. How constant must be our solicitude if we are to preserve

our health! We stand in jeopardy every hour; the slightest unwatchfulness or indiscretion on our part, and cold, heat, damp, wind, sun, snow, rain, bring upon us suffering, disease, death. How continually must we strive for bread! We are no longer dwellers in a Paradise where freely grow fruits pleasant to the sight and good for food, but in a wilderness world where we must eat our bread in the sweat of our face. It often seems, as the pessimist loves to picture it, as if nature had entered into a fierce conspiracy to starve and destroy us. The sun burns up the fields, the hurricane spreads ruin, floods devastate, the rains rot the corn, diseases waste the flocks; armies of flies, locusts, caterpillars, palmerworms, eat up the gardens, the orchards, the vineyards. This stern wrestling of man with his environment never ceases; by a bitter, intense, unremitting effort does he unclench the granite hand of nature, and faint and weary seize his daily bread.

But is not this conflict with nature part of the inspiration and programme of civilization? Contending with the globe, we are like Jacob wrestling with the angel. The fight is long and hard amid the mystery and the darkness, and the great Power seems reluctant to bless us; but the breaking of the day comes, and we find ourselves blest with corn, wine, oil, purple, feasts, flowers. Ah! and with gifts far beyond those of basket and store—ripened intelligence, self-reliance, courage, skill, manliness, virtue. Of course man suffers in the conflict, as the patriarch did. When we see the farm-labourer bent double with rheumatism, or the collier mutilated by the explosion in the mine, or the grinder with his lung gone, or the weaver with his enfeebled physique, or the seaman prematurely old through his battle with wind and wave, or any of the million workers who

carry pathetic signs of the arduousness of toil, we see the limp of the victorious wrestler. In the South Seas the natives lie on their back, and the bread-fruit drops into their mouth. But these make a poor show in the grand procession of the ages. The law of life is truly severe which enjoins that man shall eat bread in the sweat of his face, but in this struggle for life our great antagonist is our great helper; we are leaving barbarism behind us; we are undergoing a magnificent transformation; we are becoming princes of God and heirs of all things.

2. Take the struggle of man with *man*. Society is a great system of antitheses. There are international rivalries—a relentless competition between the several races and nations for power and supremacy. The various peoples watch each other across the seas; the earth is full of feuds, stratagems, competitions. And within the separate communities what complex and unceasing emulations and antagonisms exist! Neighbours strive in the commercial and political arenas for power, wealth, liberty, bread. It is gracious to admonish men to "live and let live," but every active citizen by his industry and ingenuity is in many respects making it more difficult for his neighbour to live.

But this social rivalry brings its rich compensations. It is so with the international rivalry. America and Australia at this moment are sending into this country corn, meats, fruits, and our farmers declare that they are being ruined. But the fact is, men have to be ruined that they may be made over again, and fashioned on a grander pattern. Our husbandmen will be compelled to put away all droning; they must go to school again, they must invent new methods, they must adopt new machines, sow choicer seeds, breed superior cattle; they must grub up the old canker-eaten,

lichen-laden orchards, and plant fresh fruit-trees of the best varieties. The pressure of the times will lift the national husbandry to a higher plane. And this international rivalry will have the same stimulating effect on city life. Very loud and bitter are the complaints of our manufacturers because the French, the Belgians, the Germans, the Americans, are cutting us out in many markets, and utterly spoiling our old lucrative monopolies. Our merchants and manufacturers are at their wits' end; but when men come to that point, that they may not perish, they discover a new length of wit. Old machinery is put away, and more exquisite enginery takes its place; chemistry seeks out fresh secrets; the workman is more fully educated. The international rivalries are followed by those victories of peace which enrich the nations just as much as war exhausts them. So the stern discipline, the law that will not allow the peoples to go to sleep, that involves them in perpetual anxiety, is really nourishing them into strength and faculty, giving them higher honour, securing them unspeakably larger satisfactions. Cato asked, "What was to become of Rome when she should no longer have any state to fear?" As the historian tells us, a sorry answer was soon given to the question of the veteran patriot. After a generation or two of peace and security, the Roman tenacity of purpose and power, of heroic self-sacrifice, were no more; the season of tranquillity brought with it selfishness, negligence, indulgence, and the decay of Italy set in. Each shining nation, like each shining star, is kept in its place and orbit by antagonistic forces exerted upon it by other bodies; and if this antagonism were suspended, the glorious nation would darken as the star would drop from its sphere.

The difficulties which beset personal and family life are

similarly rich in compensation. We often speak of "keeping the wolf from the door," and the majority find this a hard fight. What trouble the threatening animal gives us! If in the morning we are disposed for a little extra slumber, the ominous howl startles us from the pillow; if we are tempted to linger at the table, its fierce breathings at the threshold summon us straightway to duty; if we doze in the armchair, the gleaming eyes, the white teeth, the red throat at the window-pane, bring us to our feet. And yet how much the best of men, the most truly aristocratic families, owe to the wolf! Solicitude, Fatigue, Difficulty, Danger, Hunger, these are the true king-makers; and the misfortune with many rich families to-day is, that they are being gradually let down because they are losing sight of the wolf. The wolf not merely suckled Romulus; it suckles all kings of men. The wolf is not a wolf at all; it is an angel in wolves' clothing, saving us from rust, sloth, effeminacy, cowardice, baseness, from a miserable superficiality of thought, life, and character.

So the government of God in human society is marked by a severity men often shrink from, and yet it works out glory and blessing. Out of the conflict of man with nature, out of international oppositions and collisions, out of the complex emulations of the community, springs that glorious flower of the ages we call civilization. As the solar system and the stellar universe are sustained and developed by antagonism, so out of social antagonism shall come the new earth, which is also a new heaven, wherein dwelleth orderliness, reason, brotherhood, righteousness, progress, and peace.

III. We consider the truth of the text as it finds expression in *character*. The law of character is a fiery law.

We are taught by revelation that we can reach perfection of character and abiding felicity only through obedience, self-denial, supreme endurance, and effort. The law concerning human character and duty knows nothing of accommodating itself to our weakness and infirmity; it does not invite or admit excuses for failure of fidelity; it is imperative and uncompromising—a fiery law. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And all the discipline of life is correspondingly sharp.

And yet we must contend that this severity is only another expression of eternal love. Let us recall the remembrance of the vast disasters from which the law of God, and the discipline of life, seek to save us; for, indeed, they seek to save us from a hell of degradations, retributions, and miseries. The scientist is reconciled to austere Nature by the consideration that she "chooses a lesser evil to prevent a greater;" and the same consideration must reconcile us to life. When we are called upon to perform duties utterly repugnant to flesh and blood, to suffer grievous losses, to experience bitterest disappointments, to bleed under social humiliations, to be tortured by pain, to lose those whose love was our life, to endure the great fight of afflictions which sooner or later comes upon us all, we may rationally and consolingly murmur to ourselves, "This is a lesser evil to prevent a greater." For as the catastrophes of nature are, after all, but partial and temporary, preventing immeasurably greater calamities, so our physical pain, impoverishment, social suffering, severe toil, bereavement, and all our terrestrial woes are the lesser evils, saving us from the infinitely greater one of the superficiality, corruption, misery, and ruin of the soul. And not

only is the fiery law a wall of fire securing our salvation from the abyss; it is also a call unto a high and splendid perfection. It shows the way to the dignities, freedoms, treasures, felicities, perfections, of the highest universe and the unending life. The light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

1. Let us not reject the law of Sinai because of its severity. The law of the mount that burned with fire qualifies our liberty, lays upon us solemn obligations, threatens us with awful penalties, and therefore many resent it. They could easily admit it as so many counsels of perfection, but its authoritative and rigorous precepts are exasperating. Yet we see that the severity of nature is its salvation, that if the stern system of physical law were relaxed, the creation would go back to mud and misery. And does not the salvation of the nations lie in a similar severity? Professor Seeley says, "Poland perished through the fatal pleasure of unbounded individual liberty." Other great empires have been similarly dissolved, and it does not seem at all unlikely that some modern empires will share the same fate. Only by rigid subordination do nations grow in power and greatness. And so with the individual. The ten stern statutes of Sinai, if men will so characterize them, are really so many definitions of one eternal law of love; and through the keeping of these commandments, which are not grievous, do we attain strength, beauty, gladness, victory. In our blindness and passion we repudiate the cords of discipline; we will not tolerate these circumscriptions, prohibitions, menaces; we covet a larger liberty; we despise "the strait-lacing" of revelation. But the fact then stares us in the face that we can be nothing without

self-restraint and obedience. I notice that the musician with the harp believes in strait-lacing, and it is only when the strings are stretched nigh to the breaking that he brings out the finest music. So in human life, caprice, licence, abandonment, mean dissonance and misery; only through obligation, duty, discipline, do all the chords of our nature become tuned to the music of a sweet perfection.

2. Let us not reject the Lord Jesus because He comes to us with a cross. The law of Jesus is a fiery law. The challenge of the Master is, "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow Me." To attain the highest we must be crucified with Christ. Hence it is that many decline Christian discipleship. A little while ago Renan, addressing a brilliant company in Paris, spoke thus: "The French language and the wine of France have a humanitarian part to play. French makes the heart to rejoice; its favourite locutions imply a sentiment of gaiety, an idea that nothing is really serious at the bottom, and that you enter into the ideas of the Eternal through laughter, and not tears. . . . God never did evil, and He did not grudge men contentment, which could only be attained by gaiety of heart." What a mighty difference there is between the laughing philosopher and Jesus Christ! "Contentment can only be gained by gaiety of heart," says the Frenchman; says Jesus Christ, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest to your soul." "Nothing is really serious at the bottom," suggests the modern; whilst Jesus Christ in His every word and act declared the awful seriousness of life. "You enter into the ideas of the Eternal through laughter, and not tears," says the gala orator; says Jesus Christ, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Dear

brethren, which of these teachers do you accept? The man crowned with rosebuds, or the One crowned with thorns? Is it to be the wine of France, or the cup of which He drank who loved us and who gave Himself for us? Is it to be gaiety, laughter, song; or thoughtfulness, seriousness, duty? the path of poppies, or the path of the Passion? Oh! be sure that Christ is the grander Teacher, and through the self-denial He exacts and illustrates shall we attain life and peace.

3. Let us not shrink from the tribulations of life. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." The whole case is here. We must not consider the fiery trial "a strange thing." It is the universal order. We witness it in all nature; we discern it in all the history of civilization; it is the common experience. The fiery trial is not some ordeal peculiar to the Christian saints; it is appointed to the whole of humanity. We must not consider the fiery trial an uncompensated thing. The cross we carry is no longer a pitiless and crushing burden; we look to its ultimate design, and know it as the rough but precious instrument of our purification and perfecting. This assurance is our rational consolation in the midst of many and mighty sorrows. The naturalist reminds us how the furious eagerness of the winged insects, which seem to be the agents of death, is frequently a cause of life. By an incessant persecution of the sick flocks, enfeebled by hot damp airs, they ensure their safety. Otherwise they would remain stupidly resigned, and hour by hour become less

capable of motion until they could rise no more. The inexorable spur of the furious insects knows, however, the secret of putting the flocks on their legs; though with trembling limbs, they take to flight; the insect never quits them, presses them, urges them, bleeding, to the wholesome regions of the dry lands and the living waters where their afflictions cease. Which things are an allegory. On life's lower plains, living lives of ease and indulgence, the strength and dignity of the soul would perish; but the ills of life disturb us, sting us, incessantly attack and pursue us, until bleeding we find the higher planes of thought and life, until at last we reach the sweet table-lands of which God Himself is Sun and Moon. The fiery law is a chariot of fire, lifting true souls into heavenly places.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—1 Cor. x. 13.

We are all familiar with the severity of life; we often feel, and feel bitterly, the extreme tension and painfulness of our present situation. It may be quite true that the fiery law is on the whole benign, that the battle of life ends with a victory for the better, ere it begins again a battle for the best; but so far as we are concerned individually, it is very difficult to bear the pressure and pain. Light, consolation, encouragement, hope, are greatly needed by us. Very delightful, then, is our text, showing how the Divine love tempers life's fierce tyranny. Nature is a sphere of darkness, life is a tragedy, into which revelation brings precious explanations and encouragements.

I. We observe that *whilst discipline is essential to the perfecting of our nature, the struggle of life might be excessive and destructive.* "Tried above that ye are able." How easily this might be! We see in nature that the law of antagonism may become so severe and unremitting that it makes impossible those things of beauty and joy which

prevail under normal conditions. In Arctic regions plants, which under more genial conditions would unfold themselves in a delightful perfection, remain stunted and mean, exhausting their vitality in withstanding the severities of the climate. The same is true of animal life. The Newfoundland dogs of Kane in the Polar seas became mad through the excruciating severity of the cold. The birds come to a certain strength and glory through the necessity of awareness, but there is often such a fearful bloodthirstiness in the tropical forest, such a profusion of cruel hawks, owls, serpents, and beasts of prey, that a bird's life is one long terror, and it forgets its music. And this applies equally to man. He is all the better for a regulated conflict with his environment, but all the worse if the conflict attain undue severity. His conflict with nature may exhaust him. The Greenlander is physically and intellectually stunted; the bitter climate renders it impossible for him to grow to any fair measure of perfection. The Eskimo will never rival the Greek; no splendid civilization will arise under the aurora borealis, any more than roses and myrtles will grow there; the vital element in human nature is exhausted by the severe and unceasing struggle with cold and darkness. History shows how often political oppression and social rivalries have destroyed most flourishing communities; the austere conditions necessary to civilization becoming fatal if unduly intensified through ignorance, selfishness, and violence. Sometimes a hopeful people have collapsed because they have been compelled to struggle at once against human oppression, and the destructive forces of inorganic nature; with both combined against him, man sooner or later succumbs, and the fields he has won from the primæval

wood relapse once more into wild forestry, or into barren wildernesses.[1] On all sides we may see that the stern laws which are necessary to our development may become exhaustive and destructive, passing beyond a given limit, as in athletics a man may be overtrained. And all this is just as true of our moral as it is of our physical and intellectual nature. A fair share of hardship develops heroic qualities, but when existence becomes too hard it breaks the spirit; the child cruelly treated becomes cowed; men and women bred in misfortune's school become timid, nervous, cowardly. So, if Heaven did not temper life, the finer qualities could never be developed in us. Burdens too heavy to be borne, would break our heart; temptations too fiery, or protracted, wear out our patience; sorrows too acute, drink up our spirit. Overborne by unmitigated pressure, we should lose all faith, courage, hope; nothing would be left to us but atheism, cynicism, despair.

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." It is truly comforting to recognize the hand of God limiting and regulating the severities of life, so that they may serve and not destroy us. When life for a little while proceeds smoothly, easily, happily, it is easy to sing with the poet—

> "High-throned on heaven's eternal hill,
> In number, weight, and measure still
> Thou sweetly orderest all that is."

But in the presence of storms, earthquakes, hurricanes, plagues, it is not so easy to believe in number, weight, and measure; then it seems to imply only confusion, recklessness, purposelessness. And yet we are sure that majestic

[1] Marsh, "The Earth as modified by Human Action."

law prevails amid volcanoes, cyclones, eclipses, plagues, as amid the serenest scenes of nature. So amid the strange conflicts and sorrows of individuals, communities, and races, benign law reigns; the sufferings of men also are in number, weight, and measure. In the Old Testament, God is represented as a Destroyer with a plumbline in His hand. Now, a plumbline is usually employed for the purpose of building up, but God is represented as using it for the work of destruction. "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and He shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness."[1] Jehovah is represented as using the plumbline in pulling down, inasmuch as He carries out this reverse of building with the same rigorous exactness as that with which a builder carries out his well-considered plan. The grand idea pictured by the prophet is, that in judgment God accomplishes His purpose with extremest exactness and discrimination. The blizzard owns the same rule as the zephyr; the storm that scatters is measured as delicately as the sunshine that ripens; one gracious will fashions the flower, and points the thorn; the same curious wisdom that creates, ultimately dissolves the organism into the dust. Heaven destroys as it builds, with line and plummet. What a mighty comfort it is, then, to know that the seeming irrationality of pain is not real, and that all suffering is adjusted to capacity and need! Amid all the confusion, waste, ruin, sweat, tears, and blood of the groaning creation, God stands with the measuring-line, dealing to every man trial, as He assigns to every man duty, according to his several ability. "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 11.

II. *Let us observe some of the limitations which God has imposed on the severity of life.* "But will with the trial also make a way of escape."

1. There are doors of escape *in the direction of nature and intellect.* There are sweet interludes in our conflict with nature. On holiday-days, and in hours of contemplation, we are often rested and refreshed by the sights, and sounds, and suggestions of earth and sky. The sunlight, the leaves, the green grass, the thousand flowers between, the winged musicians, the sea, the clouds, the stars, how they caress and comfort us; how at intervals they cause us to forget the vexations and burdens of life, its cares, its wrongs, its regrets! Often does the philanthropist, the thinker, the statesman, the trader, the toiler, forget in the sweet fields of nature the pressure and weariness of life. It is not all conflict with nature. Summer hangs out a gay flag of truce. Men shout in the gladness of the vintage; the sky rings with the joy of harvest. We have all gracious hours in which the discords of life are drowned in the music of the world. There are doors of escape also into the intellectual world. The door opening into the library, the picture-gallery, the observatory, the museum—all are doors of hope and salvation. In literature, art, and science increasing multitudes are finding bright intervals which make life endurable, and something more than endurable. It is a great mistake to regard books, pictures, organs, telescopes, as mere toys and trifles, having no essential significance to serious men; the value of these instruments, and all that they represent, is profound—they serve to save a long-suffering race from insanity and despair. The little flower in the desert kept faith and hope alive in the heart of the traveller Bruce; and beauty ever renders that

gracious service to a race fainting under the burden and heat of the day.

Our pessimistic writers strongly urge the preciousness of poetry, music, and painting, as sources of consolation, as delightful resting-places in a galling life. Here, they say, for a few moments, at least, we get rid of the gnawing hunger of desire; art is the one palliative of the woe of being. Now, Christianity is far from accepting the pessimistic theory of art and poetry; it does not exaggerate the value of these pursuits, it does not by any means consider them the only alleviations of human sorrow, but it allows and enjoins the noble use of all things of loveliness. One of the very welcome doors of escape from a world of trial is the gate that is called Beautiful. The Christian world will do well not to despise this gate, but to claim it boldly and frequently for the much-tried million. Let us all, as often as we may, pass this charmed portal, and taste the precious assuagements of knowledge, harmony, eloquence, and grace.

2. The Divine government softens the severity of life by *the disposition and alternation of the trials by which we are exercised.* A door of escape from one trial is sometimes found in the door which opens upon another, and one, perhaps, not at all less severe. Now, this variation of trial must be regarded as a mitigation of trial. Scientists speak of a doctrine of "unequal wear." Would not character be injured by unequal friction, by the stress of life falling constantly on the same article of faith, on the same faculty of the soul? Would not uniformity and monotony of pressure, malform, exhaust, destroy, the sufferer? Surely this would be the case. Continued trial, unrelieved, unchanged trial, would be no discipline whatever; character

would be misshapen under such pressure, as the trees on the seashore are by the constant wind. But the outer world is exquisitely adjusted to the exigencies of the inner world; and so the incidence of trial is ever being shifted, the wear and tear of life distributed and equalized, so that the whole man, the whole race, may be duly exercised and developed. Weary with work, we find relief in a change of work; a different task exercises other muscles of our body, other fibres of our brain, and we are often more refreshed and advantaged by a change of tasks than we should be by a complete cessation of activity. Thus in the discipline of life wonderful moral ends are being compassed by the constant changing of our burden, and the constant changing of our strength. Peter speaks of "being in heaviness through *manifold* temptations;" but that heaviness might have been utterly crushing had those temptations been less diversified. We little know how much we owe to the vast variety and unceasing change which obtain in the discipline of human life. Change and novelty play their benign part in trial as in pleasure. Manifold temptations are counter-irritants; they relieve one another; together they work to a complex strength and perfection.

Elihu questioned Job, "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?" No, we do not know the balancings of the clouds—how God supplements one dark thing with another, how He neutralizes one dark thing with another, how He completes one dark thing with another, how He makes all dark things agree to some bright consequence—all this we do not understand; but it is our strong consolation to know that He does balance the clouds, that He sets one thing over against another with such subtle and gracious

wisdom that they unfailingly work out the individual and general advantage. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, but every shadow, bolt, lightning, hailstone, belonging to the economy of darkness is governed by absolute wisdom and righteousness. The epigram of Themistocles, that "ruin had averted ruin," has often palpable illustration in the history of men and nations; but it is only in the light of revelation that we fully understand the wide sweep of this policy—by ruin, ruin is averted; by constantly spreading the lower grounds of life with ruin, Heaven averts the ruin of the race in its highest powers and hopes.

3. The severity of life is broken *by that law of reaction which God has established within our nature.* Trials without discover forces within. The way of escape from outer trials is by doors which open into the depths of the soul. The Chinese express an absolute dilemma by saying, "There is no road into heaven, and no door opening into the earth;" but even in such desperate moments there may be a way of escape by taking refuge within the soul itself. Mighty forces often lie latent in nature until peculiar conditions elicit them. The trembling dewdrop is an electric accumulator, and within its silvery cells is stored a vast energy; the raindrop and the snowflake are the sport of the wind, but, converted into steam, we are astonished at their potentiality; the tiny seed seems weakness itself, yet, beginning to germinate, it rends the rock like a thunderbolt. Thus is it, only in a far more eminent degree, with human nature strengthened by the indwelling Spirit of God. In the first hours of trial we may be bewildered, stunned, staggered, but the latent forces of our nature, stimulated into action, render us equal to the most trying situation and the most trying moment. Says Victor

Hugo, "There are instincts for all the crises of life." A deep perplexity awakens a flash of insight; a bitter opposition sets the soul on fire; a grave peril opens our eyes to horses and chariots of fire; a severe catastrophe evokes a heroism of which the sufferer had not thought himself capable. The true soul possesses an innate bravery that will not permit it tamely to yield to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts." The deep without calls to the deep within. The deep of worldly suffering challenges an inner deep of patience and fortitude; the deep without, strewn with the shipwreck of fortune, reveals within a deep of courage; the deep without yawns into the blackness of despair, when forthwith hope springs immortal in the breast. We do not know the deeps within until they are revealed by the deeps without, and then, if we are faithful to ourselves and to God, we discover that the *Profundus* of the soul swallows up triumphantly the dark *Profundus* of this mortal life.

Speaking as a scientist, Sir W. R. Grove said, "The element of force is mainly taken by us into account, and too little stress is laid upon the element of resistance." Now, if this be true of the physicist, it is still more true of us as we form our estimate of human life. We forget "the element of resistance" which so gloriously distinguishes human nature. We linger over the mournful and harrowing spectacle of external trial—the physical agony, the social pressure, the sharp humiliations and sorrows of life and death; but we must learn to recognize more fully that native strength of heart which counters the shocks of doom—the patience of the race, the unsubduable courage resolute with each new difficulty and foe; the humour, the poetry,

the hope of the soul, which survives ten thousand tragedies. And we must remember this element of resistance in our personal life. Some of us have little of this element because we have sinned it away—wasted the secret, sublime strength in sordid and sensual living; but all who are true to God and His law find, when all other doors are shut, that a precious way of escape opens into the magnificence of the soul. The mere metaphysician perceives the extraordinary virtue of this mystic interior power: "In extreme cases the inner-deriving activity will conquer. Martyrs may find the flames at the stake as pleasant as rose-leaf couches."[1] God dwelling in us, working in us, speaking in us,—here is the limitation of the otherwise overwhelming burden of life. As we pass through scorching flame and sweeping flood, He giveth us the victory through the Spirit which worketh in us mightily.

4. The rigour of life is abated *by the social law*. A while ago men refused to see anything in the world but the law of antagonism. Darwin detected this law acting mercilessly in the organic world, crushing out all weaker and unfitting forms, when forthwith thinkers insisted on seeing this law everywhere, and in regarding it as the key to the whole philosophy of history and progress. But students are now more and more recognizing that the biological law does not dominate society as it does nature, and that it is false to consider the human species as regulated entirely by the same law of development which obtains in the inferior species. The law of association and sympathy, considerations of right, of charity, of solidarity, obtain amongst human beings, and this mutuality is the supreme law of their relations. If, says the modern evolutionist,

[1] Cyples, "The Process of Human Experience."

stern competition is the fundamental law of nature, coalition is the fundamental law of civilization. The social law is the principle of civilization, and the process of civilization is nothing else than the giving to this principle of reciprocity ever more complete ascendency.

In this social law many doors of escape open to us when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. What a royal gate is that of Charity! Hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, asylums, shelter multitudes who are afflicted in mind, body, and estate. In many ways the wealth of rich men, and the skill of gifted men, are being exercised to soothe the sorrows of the suffering and the desolate. How many welcome doors Sympathy opens! The sentiment of brotherhood, working freely in all directions, immensely alleviates the bitterness of life. What a grand door is Domesticity! Sore with the attritions of business, wounded by injustice, weary with the fight of life, we soon forget all when soothed with the affections and entertainments of love. Oh, if we were to develop the social law as we might, what a gracious and sufficient antidote it would prove to the afflictions we bewail! Modern literature has fixed our attention on the severity of law, the cruelty of nature, the struggle of existence, until at last men are being paralyzed with the spirit of scepticism and hopelessness; but we forget that we have in our bosom a key opening iron doors—the power of love, the magic of mercy, the conquering energy of sympathy and unselfishness. And in this growth of the sentiment of fraternity lies the great hope of the future. Science, education, and government may lessen the sufferings of humanity, but when they arrive at the irreducible minimum, what keen and profound sufferings will still rend men's hearts! When learning and legislation

have reached the irreducible minimum, the coffin is left. It is no part of the purpose of God in this present dispensation to deliver us from severe tribulations, but to leave these for necessary purposes of discipline, strengthening us that we may be able to bear them. Men must find the way of escape from inevitable distresses, in the social law. Intellect is delivering us from the mere brute strife of a blind antagonism, and it will yet further deliver us, but the fulness of the victory will be wrought out in love. We must honour, help, shelter, deliver, and bless one another. We must set the law of sympathy against the law of antagonism. Forgiveness must more and more take the place of retaliation, reciprocity the place of egotism, sacrifice the place of indulgence, union the place of isolation and rivalry. Love will prove the sovereign antidote to the sting of life; the love which Christ came to shed abroad in our heart.

5. Finally, life is blessedly tempered *by the religious hope.* "Behold, a door was opened in heaven." Often is it our high privilege to escape from crushing sorrow through this golden door opening into the eternal light. The Lord's Day opens a great and an effectual door to a weary world. It is indeed appalling to think what would be the condition of things with us were it not for the rest, the refreshment, the inspirations, of the Holy Day. The door of the Church is another gate of relief we may well pass with thanksgiving. What a hiding-place is the Church of God from the storm and stress of life! Strengthened by its sacraments, uplifted by its songs, ennobled by its solemnities, the penitent believing soul forgets its griefs and cares, tasting the powers of the world to come. No language can express the infinite preciousness of the grace flowing to us through the ministers and institutions of the Church of Christ.

The Bible is a gate of pearl through which bleeding souls may fly for refuge. Again and again would men faint, sink in utter desperation and blasphemy, were it not for the lines of light traced by God's finger shining through the darkness. The door of our chamber opening right upon the Throne of God is a living way of escape for men tempted, and tried beyond endurance. A lady recently related in one of the journals how she went through a veritable blizzard to view a flower-show. With one step she passed out of the wild night, the deep snow, the bitter wind, into a brilliant hall filled with hyacinths, tulips, jonquils, cyclamens, azaleas, roses, and orchids. It is the privilege of godly men, at any time, to pass at a step from the savage conflicts of life right into the sweet fellowship of God, finding grace to help in the time of need. It is the knowledge of God, the light of His truth, the power of His Spirit, the hope of His glory, which make us more than conquerors in the times when men's hearts fail them for fear. "For which cause we faint not." No men knew more of the travail of existence than did the Apostles, but by laying hold of the Eternal they smiled at life in its darkest aspects, at death in its cruellest forms.

Thus the painfulness of mortality is graciously chequered with gold. The great Shepherd who knows full well the heat of the sun, the roughness of the path, the teeth of the briars, gives His flock quiet resting-places, and opens to them in desert places fountains of water. Victor Hugo says truly, "The whole of existence resembles a letter modified in the postscript." Marvellously in all kinds of ways, in all directions, does the grace of God assert itself in softening the severity that threatens utterly to overwhelm us. The consolations of God are not small with

us. But do we avail ourselves of these consolations? With a strange perversity we often fail to do so, and sink under the fury of the storm which bursts upon us. Let us acquaint ourselves with the ways of escape provided by a merciful and faithful Creator. In the days when the worst comes to the worst, let us fly through the open doors of salvation, that God may hide us in His secret place until the storm is passed. If we would only magnify the grace of God in the spirit of gratitude and faith, as in the spirit of discontent and unbelief we magnify the tribulations of the present time, it would be infinitely better for us and with us. Be of good courage. God is faithful. See the rainbow that stands over you, the summer that is beyond you, and you shall glory in tribulations also.

THE ELIMINATION OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

THE ELIMINATION OF THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM.

"For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act."—ISA. xxviii. 21.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—REV. xxi. 3, 4.

HAVING already considered the painful conditions of human life and the generous methods by which Heaven mitigates our trial, we design now to show how the principle of antagonism, having served its purpose, will cease from the universe redeemed in Jesus Christ. Mark, first—

I. *That the law of antagonism is unnatural.* Two widely different views are held concerning the character of the universe upon which we look. Some great thinkers maintain that nature is altogether good and glorious. A distinguished scientist reminds us of "that gracious Nature to whom man yearns with filial instinct, knowing her, in spite of fables, to be his dear mother."[1] This is not the language

[1] Ray Lankester, "Degeneration," p. 67.

of a poet, but of a man of science who has a large and intimate knowledge of the world of which he speaks so admiringly, so affectionately. On the other hand, equally able men teach that nature is malefic and abominable. J. S. Mill in a famous passage paints nature as teeming with amazing cruelty and terror. In the opinion of the Gold Coast people a large spider made the world, and the philosopher would have readily agreed that it bore many marks of such creation. So widely different is the interpretation of the world given by these thinkers, that it is hardly possible to believe that they are speaking of the same object. Which view, then, is correct? We say both, and taken together they express the view of the world given in the Christian revelation; the conclusions of philosophy agree with the theology of the Church.

Revelation declares that the world as it existed in the thought of God, as it came from the hand of God, was "very good." The constitution of things was altogether gracious; the original order was full of harmony, loveliness, and blessing. It was just like God to make a world like that which arises with music and splendour upon our delighted senses in the beginning of revelation. A world so garnished and ordered agrees with our conceptions of the Divine wisdom and goodness. Over such an orb well might the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. This is the world extolled by Isaiah, by Job, and by Milton; the world that in all ages has filled pure and profound souls with rapture; the world celebrated by the modern scientist as "the gracious Nature to which man yearns with filial instinct, knowing her to be his dear mother." But revelation just as distinctly acknowledges that the world, as we know it, is not thus beautiful and

good; that it is not the normal development of the world which God created and made. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" "The creature was made subject to vanity;" "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Through the transgression of the law man has broken up the delicate and magnificent order of the world, and introduced into all mundane spheres strife, suffering, and death. It was entirely unlike God to make a world like this. Over such an orb well may the angels weep. This is the world reprobated by Koheleth, by Buddha, by Schopenhauer, by Mill.

Our first text reminds us that God sometimes executes what must be described as "strange work;" that is, work which seems altogether at variance with His glorious character, and with the acknowledged principles of His government. Israel through their sins provoked Jehovah to act as if He were forgetful of His covenant—nay, to act as if in direct contradiction to His gracious character and purpose. Now, we affirm that the whole present government of this world partakes largely of this character; it is a "strange work" to meet an extraordinary crisis. The sweating, the groaning, the bleeding, the dying, all the tragic aspects of life, do not belong to the Divine eternal order; they are the consequences, not of the laws of God, but of the violation of those laws, and they exist only locally and temporally for ends of discipline, lesser evils permitted and overruled for the prevention of greater. The present melancholy condition of things is not the carrying out of the original programme, but an unnatural condition of things forced on by human disobedience. If, entering a house, we find a father speaking angrily to his

child, taking away his toys, limiting his liberty, chastising him with the rod, we know that all this is contrary to parental feeling, an interruption of the common beautiful order—that it is a "strange work" directed to specific, pressing, necessary ends; so we believe it to be with this present epoch of world-suffering—it is God's strange act necessitated by our disobedience, still overruled by His love. "He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." The normal action of God is the giving of good and perfect gifts—life, health, plenty, power, beauty, joy; in these things does the Father of lights rejoice. For the rest, it is His "strange work," contrary to the impulse of His eternal love and to the order of His universal administration, although there is still mercy at the bottom, and glory in the end.

II. *That it is the purpose of God in Jesus Christ to abolish the law of antagonism.* "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." The Deity is revealed to us in the Man Christ Jesus, who brings us into loving relationship with God, and into loving relationship with one another, thus banishing the world's disorder and distress.

Comte holds that there is in society a constant tendency to give ever greater ascendency to the altruistic instincts, and he anticipates that the period is not distant in which the nobler instincts of our nature will have far larger play than they have at present. At great length the philosopher then points out the proofs by which he believes the finer instincts will attain supremacy. As the old alchemy assumed to transmute lead into gold, so by a mystic process the egoistic principles of our nature are being purified and changed with each successive generation;

until, in Comte's opinion, the dominant law of society in the future will be the broad, pure, uplifted doctrine of philanthropy. There is a secret leaven working in nature and humanity, and little by little science, education, and government will give the victory to those milder, nobler impulses of the race which hitherto have been so grievously limited by the sad sovereignty of selfishness. But it will be allowed that this doctrine of necessary, gradual improvement in the condition of the race finds little sanction in our latest science.

Our grand hope in the ultimate ascendency of the altruistic law is in Jesus Christ. He reveals to us with peculiar clearness and power the highest law of the universe —the law of love. In His life and death we have the supreme illustration of unselfishness. The grand burden of His gospel is love, mercy, pity; it is the most eloquent plea for charity, sympathy, humanity. And by the power of His Spirit He breaks down in men that tyranny of selfishness which is the secret of all our woes, and enthrones within our soul the power of love. He utterly destroys in the heart of man the egotism, pride, greed, envy, wrath, which render the emulations of society so bitter and destructive. Comte holds that the imperfections of the human brain will never permit the full supremacy of the higher instincts; but Christianity speaks another language and inspires a brighter hope. It knows of no physiological defects, of no mental limitations, of no circumstantial denials, to prevent the full supremacy of the higher instincts; but, on the contrary, it insists upon the necessity of such supremacy, and resolutely sets itself to the establishment of such supremacy. And the Spirit of Christ shall never cease to work in the race until there is no more useless

antagonism, misdirected antagonism, destructive antagonism, but there shall act instead the affinities, the attractions, the forces of a higher law, and the reign of blood and iron shall be over for ever.

But the question may be urged, What is to guarantee our safety and progress when the fiery law is abolished? Speaking of the visions of Isaiah, Renan says, "They have been the smoke of the incense with which humanity has intoxicated itself during many centuries. Powerful narcotics, consoling mankind by imaginary paradises for the sorrows of reality, will never cease to be necessary until humanity attains the state of material comfort which renders the dream useless. Now, if humanity should ever reach such a state of dull beatitude, it would be so quickly corrupted, so many abuses would be produced, that it would require to rise out of this putrid stagnation a new sacrifice of heroes, victims, expiations, of servants of Jehovah. This is the eternal circle of all life.[1] Stung by adversity, allured by dreams, society is to develop itself until it reaches a state of rich material comfort; but that state without struggle is to prove a dull beatitude, and is soon to be corrupted and dissolved. Without hunger, difficulty, woe, all things are to sink into a putrid stagnation, out of which society will not rise until the law of agony once more asserts itself. This is the eternal circle of all life. The brilliant Frenchman has seen through the historic ages, that in suffering men and nations have become strong, only to collapse utterly when they attained to wealth and security, and he thinks that this is the eternal order. But revelation teaches another and happier doctrine. It declares that the highest felicity of humanity needs no dark

[1] "History of the People of Israel," vol. iii. p. 405.

background, and that when the age of martyrdom is over the ultimate civilization will be preserved by soft but mighty forces, which hitherto have been allowed only in a very imperfect degree to assert themselves.

What shall guarantee our safety and growth when the fiery law is abolished? The prevalence of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Universal love shall take the place of antagonism in the discipline of the race. In the individual life we find a ready and apposite illustration of the passage from a lower law of action to a higher. In the days of youth we were kept to duty by the austerity of our masters; a whole system of minute and coercive discipline was necessary to overcome our laziness, our love of indulgence, our waywardness. The law of antagonism, as we encountered it in the schoolroom, was very bitter indeed to some of us; yet we now know it was essential to our progress that we should have been subjected to such coercion. But, growing into men, we conceived a passion for knowledge, art, business, duty; larger views opened to us, nobler motives began to make themselves felt, a sense of dignity and responsibility was created in us; the spur within took the place of the spur without, and the whole work of life is now done in a far freer, happier spirit. A change corresponding to this is now being wrought in the race at large. "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption

of sons." Whatever may be the exact meaning of the words here used, the general sense is clear enough, that in Christ a loftier method of government is being established, a nobler principle of action is being made possible. "The rudiments of the world" may well comprehend that law of antagonism by which the world in its childhood has been disciplined; and giving to the apostolic words the largest interpretation, which will also be the truest, the race has now received a higher law and a diviner inspiration.

In Christ we receive the adoption of sons, the inheritance of brothers, and as the spirit of Christ prevails, the race will be controlled by the milder yet stronger principle. The energy of love will replace the energy of hate; the energy of hope, the energy of fear; the energy of disinterestedness, the energy of selfishness; the energy of joy, the energy of suffering; the energy of conscience and righteousness, the energy of lawless passion. "And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works." The grand developing force of the new age is here. And this leaven, placed first in a few individual hearts, shall work until it affects the whole community, until the painful elements of life are purged, and the former things have passed away. The arc representatively gives the circle, and the love which to-day rules in a few hearts, and makes little corners here and there delightful, shall eventually beautify the earth. The race has as yet reached only its first stage of intellectual and moral existence, and in the ages to come the cruelty, the anguish, the strife of humanity shall be less and less, until "the strange act" has wrought its benign consequence, and sorrow and sighing flee away.

III. *We mark the signs that the law of antagonism is being eliminated.* One of the most remarkable features of modern thought is its deep discontent with the law of antagonism. The more emphatically the scientists assert the existence of this law, the more loudly do we resent it, the more energetically do we protest against its reasonableness and its justice. We are greatly and increasingly pained by the spectacle of universal strife and suffering. We are told that for various reasons the agony of the world is not so great as it seems, that nature knows no morality, that the splendid results justify the bloody battle; these and other excuses are urged in extenuation and defence of the principle of antagonism. But we refuse to be comforted; we will not reconcile ourselves to such a ghastly state of things; we decline to believe that such infinite sorrows are normal and inevitable. Ages of familiarity with the groans of creation have failed to reconcile us to the painfulness of life, and it is a happy sign of modern thought that this noble discontent rapidly strengthens. It spoils our pleasure in unfolding nature; it makes the light of the sun to take a sober colouring; it splashes the moon with blood; it banishes the splendour of grass and flower; it mars all our delight in skies and rainbows, in the music of the woods, in the jewels and shells of the depths. Science is simply sickened by the terrible tearings and rendings of beaks and talons; by the gaping wounds she must witness; by the awful cries to which she must listen. History writes the story of the race in blood; but we refuse to believe that she will continue to pluck her red pages out of the heart of men. Social economy begins to perceive that society is capable of a more felicitous arrangement than that of antagonistic groups. We hardly

know how to go about remedying things; we blunder sadly; we often aggravate the evils we seek to abate; but it is a comfort to know that we are profoundly discontented. We may well believe with Emerson, "This great discontent is the elegy of our loss, and the prediction of our recovery."

We see signs of change to a happier state of things in our relation to *nature*. Long ago it was understood by scientific men that the creation of man was "the introduction of a new element into nature, of a force wholly unknown to earlier periods." He was a new telluric force, and no limit could be assigned to his controlling power over terrestrial nature. And very wonderfully does revelation recognize the interdependence of man and nature; in an altogether pre-scientific age the prophets pierced to this most profound truth, that man possesses to a vast extent the power of making or marring the earth. In the past, this human power over terrestrial nature has been exercised disastrously; "man's intervention has hitherto seemed to ensure the final exhaustion, ruin, and desolation of every province of nature which he has reduced to his dominion."[1] He has wasted the garden of God; the grass has withered under his steps. But is not a great change being wrought in the relation of humanity to its environment? We are beginning to understand much better the laws and forces of the physical universe; we are rapidly learning how gloriously the elements and creatures may serve us; nay, in the fields of nature we discover how more and more to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock;" "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fig tree; and instead of the briar shall come

[1] Marsh.

up the myrtle tree;" "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The vision comes nearer. The world shall no longer revolt from man; man shall no longer revolt from the world. The biggest and bitterest of battles shall end in peace.

A celebrated traveller concludes a famous book with these pregnant words: "The superiority of the bleak north to tropical regions is only in their social aspect; for I hold to the opinion that, although humanity can reach an advanced state of culture only by battling with the inclemencies of nature in high latitudes, it is under the equator alone that the perfect race of the future will attain to complete fruition of man's beautiful heritage, the earth."[1] Only by battling with the inclemencies of nature can man reach an advanced state of culture, but having reached that intellectual and moral perfection, he will under the equator enter into complete fruition of his beautiful heritage. How much all this sounds like the teaching of the Bible! The bleak north makes us, and, being made, the perfect race enters into the paradises reserved for it beneath the sun. And there is much in modern life to indicate how easily all this may come to pass.

We see signs of change to a happier state of things within *society itself*. A process of amelioration is going on everywhere. It is marked in the business world. If the world is built on the sweating system, the determination strengthens that the worker shall no longer sweat blood. Through slavery, through feudalism, through sweating systems, does society painfully feel its way to a more equitable and gracious state of things. In the old days the bee-master

[1] Bates, "Naturalist on the Amazon," p. 388.

to reach the honey killed the bees, but now he contrives to spare the bees, who continue to live on and share their own sweetness. A similar transformation is being effected in the hives of human industry. There is an attempt to get more justice, fairness, and even mercy, into commercial rivalries; to substitute some plan of co-operation for the existing competition, if that is possible. That glove-fights are being substituted for prize-fights is indeed a slow approach to civilization, yet the thinnest gloves are a concession to the rising sentiment of humanity; so in business, modern society is getting rid of certain naked brutalities of antagonism, and giving to reason and compassion a larger place. With aching head and aching heart, thousands to-day feel that the struggle for gold and bread is bitter enough; yet a better spirit slowly emerges, tempering the fiery law.

Signs of change to a happier state of things are visible also in *international life*. There is growing up with wonderful rapidity a sense of the brotherhood of man; a larger and purer patriotism. The strong feeling on behalf of international arbitration indicates that the world is growing out of its childhood, and puts away its drum. The nations of the future, America and the colonies, are not being built up in the military spirit, but in the pursuits of industry and the love of peace. Salvator Rosa long ago painted his picture, "Peace burning the Instruments of War." This generation may not witness that glorious bonfire, but many signs signify that ere long it shall be kindled, lighting the footsteps of the race into the vaster glory that is to be.

Let us first ourselves get the spirit of Christ. Let us see that our hearts are emptied of all jealousy, pride, hatred, covetousness, all the combativeness and wrath, all the

selfishness and fierceness which create the bitterness of the world. Let Christ, the Revelation of Eternal Love, be our personal Ideal; let us constantly seek to be filled with His pure spirit! Being thus inspired, let us toil for the good of our generation—using our knowledge, riches, science, influence, to soften the sorrows of society, and to hasten on the better days. Let us profoundly believe in the golden year. It will come. This vision of the Revelation is no mockery. "These things are true and faithful." If we are faithful in our day, we shall share the ultimate victory and joy. "They without us shall not be made perfect." Courage! the darkness is passing with all its nightmares. The Lord shall be unto us an everlasting Light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. "But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Mistaken Signs; and other Papers on Christian Life and Experience. 1831. Fifth Thousand.

Life of John Wicklif. 1884. Second Thousand.

The Influence of Scepticism on Character: being the Fernley Lecture, 1886. Eighth Thousand.

The Beginning of the Christian Life. 1887. Fifth Thousand.

The Programme of Life. 1888. Fourth Thousand.

Noonday Addresses delivered in the Central Hall, Manchester. 1890. Fourth Thousand.

The Lessons of Prosperity; and other Addresses delivered at Noonday in the Philosophical Hall, Leeds. 1890. Second Thousand.

[The above volumes are all published by C. H. Kelly, Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London.]

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Preachers of the Age.

Uniform Crown 8vo Volumes. With Photogravure Portraits.
Cloth extra, 3s. 6d. *each.*

VOLUMES ALREADY PUBLISHED.

I. By His Grace THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

LIVING THEOLOGY.

"Full of wise counsels and generous sympathies."—*Times.*

II. By the Rev. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

THE CONQUERING CHRIST. (*Second Edition.*)

"Doctrinal yet practical, full of literary feeling and suppressed spiritual passion, evangelical without being narrow, moral without ceasing to be evangelical; sermons no man could hear without profit, and every man may read with advantage. Nonconformity still knows how to rear and appreciate preachers."—*The Speaker.*

III. By the LORD BISHOP OF DERRY.

VERBUM CRUCIS. (*Second Edition.*)

"The eloquent Dr. Alexander has done a rare thing for him—he has published a volume of sermons. . . . The man of culture, thought, trained observation, and holy life reveals himself in every line."—*Glasgow Herald.*

IV. By the Rev. HUGH PRICE HUGHES, M.A.

ETHICAL CHRISTIANITY.

"The volume is admirable as an illustration of the forceful style which has made him so powerful as a religious preacher and social reformer."—*Christian World.*

V. By the LORD BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"He has the rare power of making deep things plain, and the sermons often assume the form of a talk to his hearers."—*Scotsman.*

VI. By the Rev. H. R. REYNOLDS, D.D., Principal of Cheshunt College.

LIGHT AND PEACE: Sermons and Addresses.

"Allowing for the difference of standpoint between Congregationalism and Romanism, the sermons in the present volume may be compared with those of Newman."—*Glasgow Herald.*

VII. By the Rev. W. J. KNOX LITTLE, M.A., Canon Residentiary of Worcester Cathedral.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE. (*Second Edition.*)

"The sermons it contains are forcible, and may in many ways be helpful to the reader."—*Record.*

LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY, LIMITED,
St. Dunstan's House, FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

Preachers of the Age

(Continued).

Uniform Crown 8vo Volumes. With Photogravure Portraits. Cloth extra, 3s. 6d. *each.*

VIII. By the Rev. CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.
MESSAGES TO THE MULTITUDE.

"The undying memory of the great Baptist saint, whose last work on earth was the partial revision of the volume now published with his name and authority, will constitute as strong a recommendation as any that we can give."—*Times.*

IX. By the Rev. HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, M.A., Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge.
CHRIST IS ALL.

X. By the Rev. J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D., Principal of the English Presbyterian College, London.
PLAIN WORDS ON GREAT THEMES.

XI. By the Rev. EDWARD A. STUART, Vicar of St. James's, Holloway.
CHILDREN OF GOD.

XII. By the Rev. A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D., Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford.
CHRIST IN THE CENTURIES.

XIII. By the DEAN OF NORWICH.
AGONIÆ CHRISTI.

XIV. By the Rev. W. L. WATKINSON.
THE TRANSFIGURED SACKCLOTH.

XV. By the LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.
THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

XVI. By the Rev. CHARLES A. BERRY.
VISION AND DUTY.

AND OTHERS.

LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY, LIMITED,
St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street, E.C.

Date Due

Ap 10 '42			
Mr 1 '46			
MR 10 '52			

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01035 0843